BIRZ COMICS SPECIAL

東京異聞 3

【作画】梶原にき
【原作】小野不由美

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帝都・東京の夢幻に、人の身に遭遇した[illegible]
それぞれ、火炎魔人による新たな被害者か
[illegible]散った命は

大人気小野不由美の世界を精鋭梶原にきが完全漫画化!!

❖完結編第4巻同時発売!!

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【原作】小野不由美

帝が、そしてついに直までが闇御前に襲われたことから、闇御前と火炎魔人による連続殺人事件は名門鷹司家の家督争いに関係があると新太郎と万造は確信する。一方、直は闇御前の企みがわかったと語り、自分が葬めさせると決意。再び事件の軌跡を辿る新太郎と万造は、"辻斬り"に遭遇するが、間一髪、少年・輔に救われる。夜桜見物で賑わう浅草で、火炎魔人による新たなる事件が——。

❖梶原にきのコミックス❖
バーズコミックスルチルコレクション
［月と水の夜］①②
［マドンナの片想い］
大好評発売中!!

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東京異聞 一

【作画】
梶原にき
Kajwara Niki
【原作】
小野不由美
Ono Fuyumi
（新潮文庫「東京異聞」より）

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Fourth Act When the earnest prayers of the creatures of the night are answered. (Part 2) ... 129

HIRAKAWA-SAN,
WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS NOW?
ENOUGH FOR TO-NIGHT...
IN THE END, WE COULDN'T LEARN ANY-THING NEW FROM NAOSHI-SAN
IT SEEMS SO.
THERE WON'T BE ANY MORE VICTIMS?

Third Act.
Midnight garden, the fish are going round (Part 7)
STOP IT.
I WILL

NAOSHI-SAN DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING MORE...
I WONDER WHY HE'S NOT TELLING US MORE?
WHY DON'T WE GO TO ASA-KUSA?
I WANT TO SHOW YOU THE CHIROU HALL
WHAT, NOW?
HIRAKAWA-SAN
YES?
YES, I'VE SPOKEN TO THE NIGHT WATCH.

PLEASE, THIS WAY
Clack

IT'S WELL DONE.
THERE'S NOTHING ANYONE COULD USE AS A HANDLE.
THE HANDLES ARE ONLY ON THE INNER SIDE.
SO VISITORS CANNOT USE THIS TO MAKE SHORT-CUTS AND SO ON?
THERE ARE ONLY DIM GAS LAMPS INSIDE, SO THIS CRACK IS EXTREMELY HARD TO SPOT.
WOW
BESIDES, THE CUSTOMERS COME HERE TO BECOME LOST
YES, THAT'S TRUE, TOO.
WHILE WE'RE AT IT, LET ME SHOW YOU TO THE PLATFORM

BY THE WAY, DID YOU SEE THE KUROKO?
YES.
YES, I WAS EXACTLY ON GATEKEEPER DUTY AT THE TIME.
DIDN'T YOU THINK IT WAS STRANGE?
I THOUGHT IT WAS STRANGE A WOMAN HAD SNEAKED IN.
I DIDN'T THINK IT PARTICULARLY ODD THE KUROKO HAD COME TO TELL ME ABOUT IT
HE SAID SHE WAS DRESSED AS AKAHIME. AND THEN HE LEFT. THAT WAS ALL
HE CAME FROM THE SIDE AND SAID "A STRANGE WOMAN ENTERED THROUGH THE BACK."

MANZOU-KUN ALSO ASKED ME THIS AND I CHECKED, BUT I COULDN'T FIND OUT WHO HE WAS OR WHERE HE CAME FROM.
I THOUGHT HE WAS SOME SCENE-SHIFTER FROM THE NEIGHBORING SMALL PLAYHOUSES OR SHOW BOOTHS.
AND WAS HE?
MANAGING EVEN THIS MUCH IS VERY DIFFICULT.
IS THIS ALL OF IT?
SO, BACK TO THE QUESTION,
I MADE SOME PEOPLE CHECK THE PREMISES, BUT THERE WAS NOBODY.
SHE WAS NOWHERE TO BE SEEN BY THE TIME I GOT THERE.
DID YOU SEE YAMIGO-ZEN?

SO WHEN THE STAFF ARRIVED YAMIGOZEN HAD ALREADY LEFT THE STAGE..
SHE MUST HAVE..
BUT EVEN THOUGH IT WAS CLOSING TIME AND MOST VISITORS WERE GONE, IT WAS STILL VERY LIVELY WITH PEOPLE GOING TO THE NIGHT AMUSEMENTS
IF THERE WAS A WOMAN DRESSED AS AKAHIME TRYING TO MIX AMONG THEM, SHE WOULD HAVE STOOD OUT.
IT'S ONLY LOGICAL TO SUPPOSE AT LEAST SOME OF THE PEOPLE WOULD REMEMBER THE YAMIGOZEN RUMORS AND RAISE AN ALARM,
BUT NOTHING OF THE SORT HAPPENED...
THEN WAS THERE ANYONE WHO SAW THE KUROKO COME OUT?
NO WITNESSES TO THAT EITHER
ALTHOUGH IN THE CASE OF A KUROKO, ALL HE HAD TO DO WAS MIX WITH THE CROWD AND HE'D BE INSTANTLY LOST IN IT
YES, HE WOULD..
JUST ONE MORE THING
DID YOU SEE A SOBA STAND WITH A PICTURE OF HANNYA SOMEWHERE CLOSE BY?

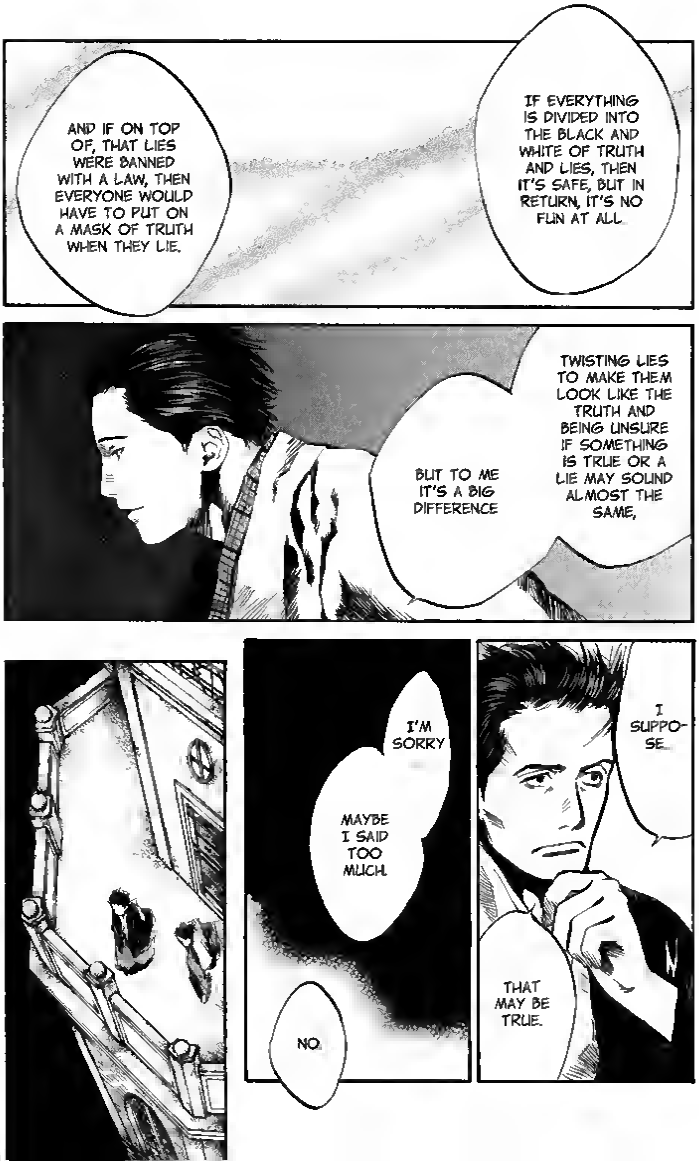
IF THERE WAS ANYONE NEW, I'D BE KNOWN IMMEDIATELY
AFTER ALL, ASAKUSA IS A PLAYING GROUND FOR ALL SORTS OF YAKUZA BOSSES
OR MAYBE A NEWS SELLER WITH A HUGE WOODEN BOX ON HIS BACK?
UNFAMILIAR TRADER AROUND HERE? IMPOSSIBLE
IT'S FINE.
WE'RE SORRY TO DISTURB YOU SO LATE IN THE EVENING.
IS THAT SO
IT WAS A REQUEST FROM NONE OTHER THAN YOU, MANZOU-SAN.
PLEASE, VISIT US WHEN WE'RE OPEN, TOO.

SO.. WHAT NOW?
ONCE WE'VE COME ALL THE WAY HERE, WHY DON'T WE CLIMB THE JUJINKAI?
ISN'T ALREADY CLOSED?
CLING
THEY SAY CONNECTIONS ARE WORTH MORE THAN MONEY...
IT'S MY FIRST TIME AT THE JUJINKAI AT NIGHT
IS THAT SO?

EVER SINCE FREE ENTERPRISE WAS BANNED BY THE LAW, EVERYTHING HAS BECOME SO CONSTRAINED...
THAT CHIROU HALL
IS A VERY FUNNY PLACE.
NOW THAT WE'RE INVITED, SHOULD WE GO GET OURSELVES LOST ONCE?
YES,
I THINK THAT MAY BE USEFUL.
YOU MEAN THE PUBLIC ENTERTAINMENT REGULATION ENFORCEMENT?
IT MADE THINGS MUCH LIVELIER FOR THE ENTERPRISES WHO MANAGED TO OBTAIN A PERMIT, BUT...
IT'S STILL VERY CONSTRICTING
YOU MAY NOT LIKE IT, BUT I WELCOMED THE DECISION OF THE GOVERNMENT.
AFTER THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE STREET CONTROL REGULATIONS, THE NUMBER OF STREET PERFORMERS AND PEDDLARS DECREASED, BUT THE ROADS HAVE BECOME MUCH CLEANER AND SAFER

I THINK IT'S GOOD THAT ALL THOSE CRUEL AND VULGAR SHOWS WERE ALSO BANNED AND DISAPPEARED
OF COURSE, IT'S SAD THAT ALL THOSE INNOCENT AND SILLY STREET PERFORMERS DISAPPEARED, BUT
-
IT'S NOT A BAD THING TO MAKE ROLLING STONES GROW ROOTS, RIGHT?
THEN MAYBE I
LOVE VULGAR AND DISGRACEFUL THINGS

AMONG THE SHOWS, THERE WERE SOME DISGUSTING ONES AND SHAMS
AND AMONG THE PEDDLARS THERE WERE SWINDLERS AND FREAKS
BUT AS LONG AS IT WAS IN THE NAME OF ENJOY-MENT,
MAYBE THAT WASN'T SO BAD AFTER ALL
ENJOY-MENT...?
YES
IN THIS WORLD, THERE ARE TRUTH AND LIES.
I THINK THEY WERE SO INTERESTING BECAUSE YOU NEVER KNEW WHICH ONE THEY WERE.


IF EVERYTHING IS DIVIDED INTO THE BLACK AND WHITE OF TRUTH AND LIES, THEN IT'S SAFE, BUT IN RETURN, IT'S NO FUN AT ALL.
AND IF ON TOP OF, THAT LIES WERE BANNED WITH A LAW, THEN EVERYONE WOULD HAVE TO PUT ON A MASK OF TRUTH WHEN THEY LIE.
TWISTING LIES TO MAKE THEM LOOK LIKE THE TRUTH AND BEING UNSURE IF SOMETHING IS TRUE OR A LIE MAY SOUND ALMOST THE SAME,
BUT TO ME IT'S A BIG DIFFERENCE
I SUPPO-SE...
THAT MAY BE TRUE.
I'M SORRY
MAYBE I SAID TOO MUCH.
NO.

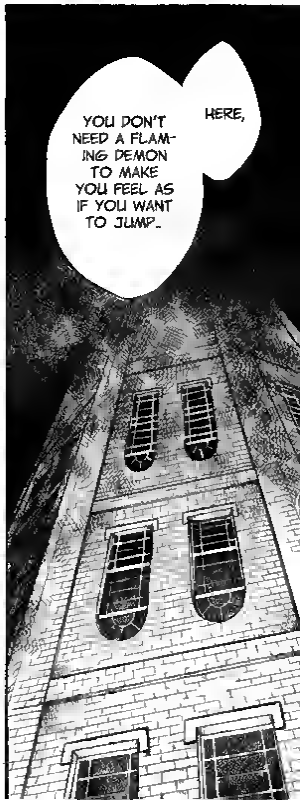
IT'S LIKE...
FLOATING OVER THE SEA.
THERE SHOULDN'T BE A NIGHT SO DARK
MY THOUGHTS EXACTLY.
THAT YOU CAN SEE NOTHING

THIS SHOULDN'T BE LIKE IT IS
THIS VIEW MAKES PEOPLE UNEASY

YOU'RE ABSO-LUTELY RIGHT

HMM?
WHO KNOWS?

I WONDER IF THIS IS WHY HE APPEARS ONLY IN HIGH PLACES..

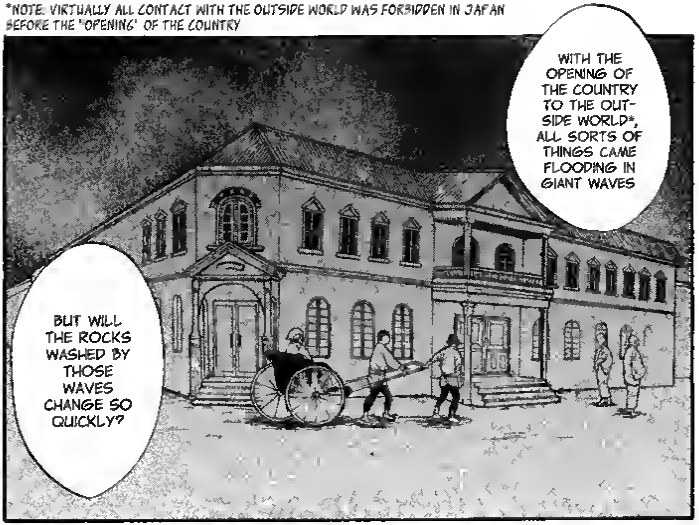

HERE,
YOU DON'T NEED A FLAM-ING DEMON TO MAKE YOU FEEL AS IF YOU WANT TO JUMP..

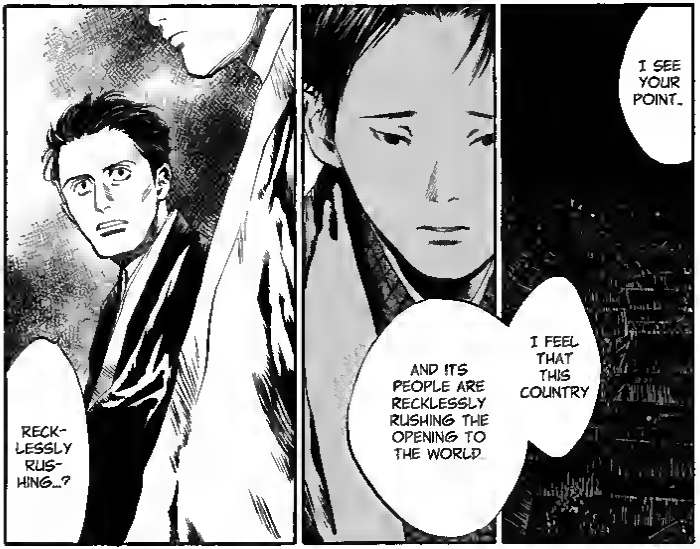
AS FOR MYSELF, I DON'T THINK THAT EITHER TOKIWA-SAN OR NAOSHI-SAN CAUSED THOSE INCIDENTS
I ALSO DON'T THINK IT WAS KIKUE-SAN OR O-CHIYO-SAN.
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
THE MORE I THINK ABOUT IT, THE MORE I WISH ALL THIS HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THE TAKATSUKASA FAMILY.
I THINK IT'S EITHER THE RELATIVES OR HOT-HEADED DEMOCRATS GETTING AHEAD OF THEMSELVES...
MAYBE NOT..
IS IT REALLY SO PREPOSTEROUS
TO THINK THAT IT WAS ALL A STRANGE MONSTER'S DOING?

WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?
ANYONE STUCK UNDER A MILLSTONE TRIES
THEIR BEST TO THRUST ASIDE THE MILLSTONE.
BECAUSE I'M THINKING SOMETHING EVEN MORE PREPOSTEROUS
THE ISHIN REVOLUTION* CAME AND THE WHOLE SOCIETY CHANGED

*NOTE: THE MEIJI RESTORATION (1868 YEAR) WAS THE END OF THE SHOGUNATE AND THE RETURN OF THE EMPEROR TO REAL POLITICAL POWER.

*NOTE: VIRTUALLY ALL CONTACT WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD WAS FORBIDDEN IN JAPAN BEFORE THE 'OPENING' OF THE COUNTRY

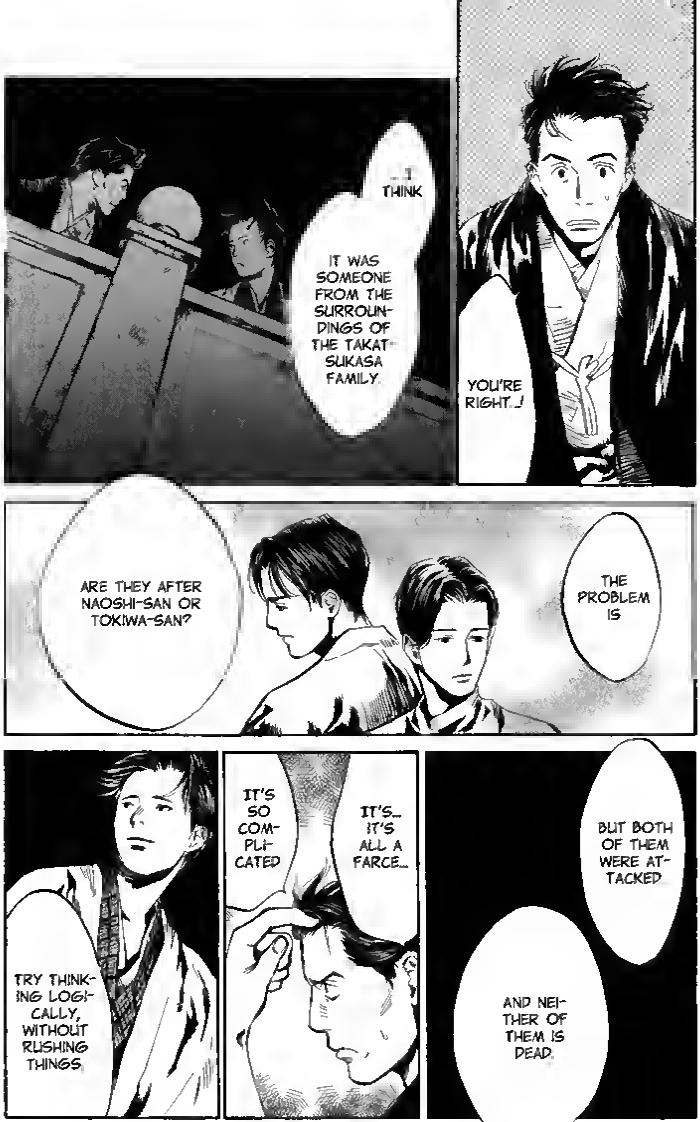

WITH THE OPENING OF THE COUNTRY TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD*, ALL SORTS OF THINGS CAME FLOODING IN GIANT WAVES
BUT WILL THE ROCKS WASHED BY THOSE WAVES CHANGE SO QUICKLY?

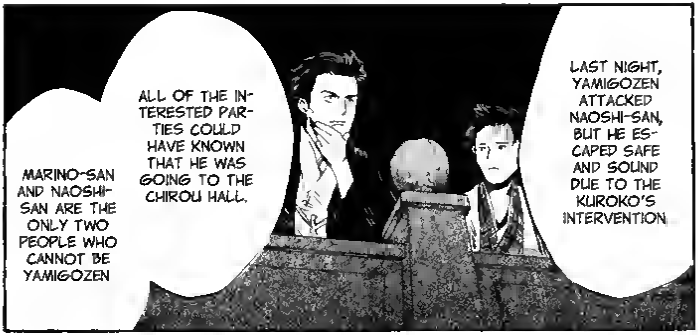

RECK-LESSLY RUS-HING...?
AND ITS PEOPLE ARE RECKLESSLY RUSHING THE OPENING TO THE WORLD
I FEEL THAT THIS COUNTRY
I SEE YOUR POINT.

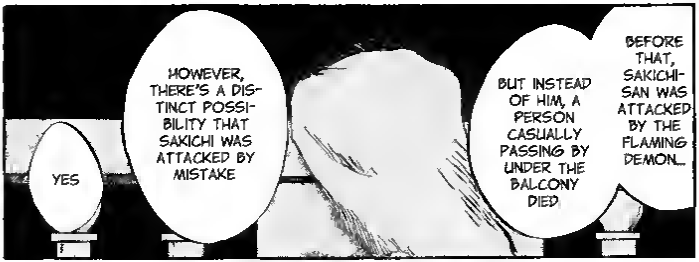
PEOPLE ARE CREATURES THAT CHANGE UNEXPECTEDLY HARD
AND NATURE, TOO, DOESN'T CHANGE SO EASILY.
PEOPLE BROUGHT ELECTRIC LIGHTS AND GAS LAMPS AND WHAT NOT TO THE NIGHT.
BUT IN THE END, THIS IS WHAT YOU GET
JUST TAKE A LOOK

OF COURSE, THERE WERE REPRESSED PEOPLE BEFORE THE ISHIN REVOLUTION, TOO.
THEY ARE THE ONES WHO BROUGHT FORTH THE WIND OF CHANGE. THEN I THINK THE TIME HAS ALMOST COME.
AND YOU THINK THOSE WHO WILL "BURST OUT" WILL BE RATHER DUBIOUS PEOPLE?
I THINK THAT, TOO.
FOR THOSE REPRESSED BY THE ISHIN REVOLUTION TO BURST OUT.
BUT YAMIGOZEN IS NOT LIKE THAT.
NEITHER IS THE FLAMING DEMON.

I THINK THEY ARE SOMEONE BURSTING OUT OF THE TAKATSUKASA FAMILY
THE FACT YAMIGOZEN'S CLAWS WERE FAKE IS PROOF THAT IT'S A HUMAN.
AND THE FLAMING DEMON?
SAKICHI-SAN SAID HE HAD BEEN DRAGGED AND THROWN OVER THE RAILING, RIGHT?
IF THE FLAMING DEMON IS THE MONSTER RUMORS MAKE HIM OUT TO BE AND HAS HANDS OF SCORCHING HEAT,
THEN WHY WEREN'T THERE ANY BURN MARKS LEFT ON SAKICHI-SAN'S BACK?


YOU'RE RIGHT...!
...I THINK IT WAS SOMEONE FROM THE SURROUNDINGS OF THE TAKATSUKASA FAMILY.
THE PROBLEM IS
ARE THEY AFTER NAOSHI-SAN OR TOKIWA-SAN?
BUT BOTH OF THEM WERE ATTACKED
AND NEITHER OF THEM IS DEAD.
IT'S... IT'S ALL A FARCE...
IT'S SO COMPLICATED
TRY THINKING LOGICALLY, WITHOUT RUSHING THINGS.


LAST NIGHT, YAMIGOZEN ATTACKED NAOSHI-SAN, BUT HE ESCAPED SAFE AND SOUND DUE TO THE KUROKO'S INTERVENTION
ALL OF THE INTERESTED PARTIES COULD HAVE KNOWN THAT HE WAS GOING TO THE CHIROU HALL.
MARINO-SAN AND NAOSHI-SAN ARE THE ONLY TWO PEOPLE WHO CANNOT BE YAMIGOZEN


BEFORE THAT, SAKICHI-SAN WAS ATTACKED BY THE FLAMING DEMON...
BUT INSTEAD OF HIM, A PERSON CASUALLY PASSING BY UNDER THE BALCONY DIED
HOWEVER, THERE'S A DISTINCT POSSIBILITY THAT SAKICHI WAS ATTACKED BY MISTAKE
YES

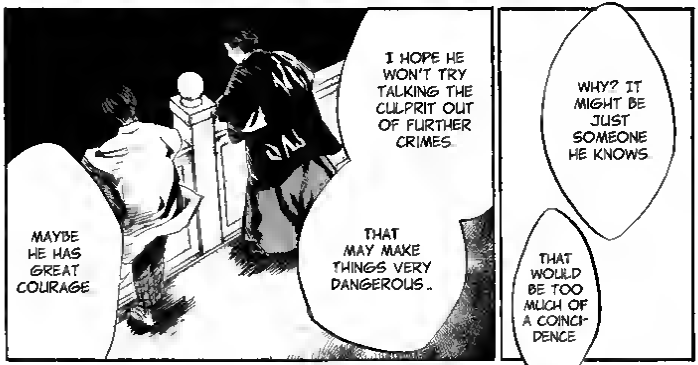
IS IT POSSIBLE THAT SAKICHI-SAN WAS THE INTENDED TARGET?
THERE'S SOMETHING THAT HAS BEEN BOTHERING ME ALL ALONG
UP UNTIL THAT INCIDENT, THE FLAMING DEMON NOT ONLY PUSHED HIS VICTIMS DOWN, HE ALSO SET THEM ON FIRE, DIDN'T HE?

WAIT, THERE'S MORE
I SEE...
BUT...
I THINK THAT IS BECAUSE THE FLAMING DEMON REALIZED THAT HE HAD GOTTEN THE WRONG PERSON
SAKICHI-SAN IS THE ONLY ONE TO WHOM THAT WASN'T DONE
YES, NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT...
BUT IF THERE WAS A CANOPY THERE, HE COULDN'T HAVE SEEN THE STREET RIGHT BELOW AND WE KNOW THAT SAKICHI-SAN BROUGHT DOWN A CANOPY AS HE FELL
SAKICHI-SAN WAS LOOKING AT THE STREET RIGHT BELOW HIM.
AT THE VERY LEAST, I THINK WE CAN SAY THE FLAMING DEMON DID NOT NECESSARILY INTEND TO KILL SAKICHI-SAN
ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY THAT THE FLAMING DEMON DRAGGED HIM SO THAT HE WOULD FALL ON THE CANOPY...?
...

SO AFTER ALL, SAKICHI-SAN WAS MISTAKEN FOR TOKIWA-SAN.
SOMETHING LIKE THAT, I THINK?
HE DIDN'T FEEL HE NEEDED TO MAKE SURE SAKICHI-SAN WAS DEAD, BUT HE WOULDN'T HAVE CARED IF HE HAD DIED
AND ON TOP OF THAT, THERE'S YAMIGOZEN'S ATTACK ON TOKIWA-SAN, TOO.
AGRH, I CAN'T MAKE HEADS OR TAILS OF IT.
OR MAYBE KIKUE-SAN...
NOT TO MENTION THAT YAMIGOZEN HAD ALREADY KILLED THE WIFE OF THE BARREL SHOP OWNER THAT NIGHT.
IF THE CRIMINAL IS AFTER TOKIWA-SAN,
I WONDER IF TOKIWA-SAN DIDN'T WALK IN ON SOMETHING YAMIGOZEN DIDN'T WANT TO BECOME
YES.
THEN IT MUST BE SOMEONE WHO KNEW TOKIWA-SAN HAD GONE TO KIKUE-SAN'S HOME...

AH, BUT NO, THAT'S NOT IT EITHER
IN THAT CASE, ATTACKING NAOSHI-SAN AFTER THAT WOULD NOT MAKE ANY SENSE.
THAT'S TRUE.
WHAT COULD HAVE NAOSHI-SAN CAUGHT UP ON?

HE MIGHT KNOW WHO YAMIGOZEN IS
THEN IT WOULD MEAN SHE'S SOMEONE FROM HIS CLOSE SURROUNDINGS


WHY? IT MIGHT BE JUST SOMEONE HE KNOWS
I HOPE HE WON'T TRY TALKING THE CULPRIT OUT OF FURTHER CRIMES.
THAT WOULD BE TOO MUCH OF A COINCIDENCE
THAT MAY MAKE THINGS VERY DANGEROUS..
MAYBE HE HAS GREAT COURAGE

I WONDER WHAT THE TAKATSUKASA FAMILY ARE HIDING?

Third Act

Midnight garden, the fish are going round. (Part 8)

TEITO NIPPOU
WHAT?
TOKIWA-SAN?
YES
HE SAID HE WANTED TO INVITE YOU TO DINNER AS AN APOLOGY FOR THE OTHER NIGHT
WHAT A SUR-PRISE.

TOKIWA-SAN IS A VERY POLITE AND ATTENTIVE MAN.
TELL HIM I WILL BE THERE
YES
HMM. SINCE I'M GOING TO THE AZABU MANSION ANYWAY
MAYBE I SHOULD TRY TAKING THE ROUTE TOKIWA-SAN TOOK THE DAY OF THE ATTACK.
WELL, NOT THAT I WILL PROVE ANY-THING BY THAT

THE DARKNESS OF THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL
IS DEEPER THAN I COULD HAVE IMAGINED
ALL THOSE SUSPICIOUS PEOPLE
ARE PEOPLE EXASPERATED AND REPRESSED BY THE FORCED OPENING OF THE COUNTRY, EH?

SEEMED CAPABLE OF GIVING BIRTH EXACTLY TO SUCH CREATURES.
IT'S TRUE THAT DARKNESS SPREADING JUST LIKE A SEA...
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE.
RIDICULOUS
NO MATTER HOW BIZARRE THEY MAY SEEM
JUST AS MANZOU-KUN SAID
BOTH THE FLAMING DEMON AND YAMIGOZEN ARE HUMAN!

IT'S ALL A HUMAN'S DOING
ANYWAY
LET'S GO TO KIKUE'S HOUSE FIRST.

IF I WANT TO GET TO AZABU FROM KIKUE'S HOUSE, I MUST HEAD...
IF HE WAS THAT WORRIED ABOUT PEOPLE SEEING HIM, THEN OF COURSE HE WOULD HAVE CHOSEN THE MOST DESERTED ROAD...
THAT DAY, TOKIWA-SAN NOT ONLY DIDN'T USE A RICKSHAW, HE MADE SURE NOBODY WOULD SEE HIM AND WALKED ALONE

THIS ROAD...
IS MUCH MORE DESOLATE THAN I THOUGHT
THERE ARE NO STREET LAMPS, SO IT'S PITCH DARK AFTER SUNSET.
I SHOULD HAVE BROUGHT A PAPER LANTERN.

IT'S THIS ALLEY
TOKIWA-SAN WAS ATTACKED HERE...
WHICH MEANS THE SOBA STAND WAS LEFT SOMEWHERE AROUND HERE.

BUT...
THE BARREL SHOP OWNER'S WIFE WAS ATTACKED OVER THERE.
TOKIWA-SAN REALLY HAS GUTS TO WALK THIS ROAD ALONE.

IT'S SO FORLORN.

Tatsuhou
Oui
Non

I'm Tatsubou...
NO WAY...

THE HUMAN SOUL SELLER?!
ARE YOU SURE HIRAKAWA SAN?
HIRAKAWA-SAN!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "HUMAN SOULS"...?!
AH, NO
HE LOOKED EXACTLY LIKE THE RUMORS DESCRIBED HIM...
I'M SURE I'M NOT MISTAKEN.
THERE REALLY IS SUCH A TRADE
IT'S A STREET PERFORMANCE, SHOWING FUZZY LIGHTS DUBBED "HUMAN SOULS"
AH, AND THAT'S ALL?

I'M NO GOOD WITH SUCH CREEPY THINGS
THERE WAS A CEMETERY VERY CLOSE TO THE HOUSE IN YOKOHAMA, SO I REALLY HATED IT WHEN THEY SENT ME OUT ON ERRANDS DURING THE NIGHT.
I WAS SURE YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT REAL SOULS.
HE VERY MUCH HATED GHOSTS AND MONSTERS AND ALL SUCH THINGS
I SEE. SO LORD HIROMICHI WAS ACTUALLY A TIMID PERSON.
THE LATE MASTER SCOLDED ME QUITE A LOT FOR THAT
DID HE?
FATHER REALLY HATED EVERYTHING THAT SMELLED OF SUPERSTITION
OF COURSE NOT!
HE WAS VERY BRAVE

I HAD FORGOTTEN THAT.
ACCORDING TO FATHER,
HE HATED FORTUNE TELLERS AND CHARMS..
I REMEMBER ONCE,
WHEN SEVERAL OF OUR SERVANTS HAD DIED IN SUCCESSION. KATSURAI-SAN GOT A GOOD LUCK CHARM FROM A SHINTO SHRINE FOR HIM AND HE FLEW INTO A DEMONIC RAGE.
PEOPLE FROM OTHER CULTURES THINK OF GOOD LUCK CHARMS AND SO ON AS EITHER OBSOLETE OR CREEPY..
AH, SO THAT WAS THE REASON.
IN CONTRAST, HIS WIFE WAS FROM A FAMILY OF ONMYOUJI*, BUT HE WAS THE KIND OF PERSON TO WORRY ABOUT SUCH THINGS,
SO SOMETIMES THEY HAD QUARRELS ABOUT THAT.
O-TAE, YOU SHOULDN'T TALK ABOUT THINGS THAT SHAME HIM.
AH!
I'M SORRY! THAT WAS VERY RUDE OF ME!

*NOTE. FOR MORE INFO. LOOK HERE
HTTP://EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG/WIKI/ONMY%C5%8DDO

LORD HIROMICHI WAS A VERY RATIONAL PERSON.
YES.
HE ALSO HATED ALL THINGS RELATED TO FEUDALISM AND THE PREVIOUS ERA.
ALTHOUGH HE SAID WE SHOULDN'T JUST TREASURE FOREIGN CULTURE, HE WENT AND DID IT BEFORE ANYONE ELSE.
PROBABLY THAT'S WHAT YOU NEED TO BECOME A SUCCESSFUL DIPLOMAT.
IS THAT SO...?
BUT ISN'T THIS SUCH A WASTE?
I FEEL FOR HATSUKO-SAMA...
HE HATED HER FAMILY QUITE A LOT, TOO
YOU HAVE LORD HIROMICHI'S EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW, SO DON'T YOU HAVE ANY INTENTION TO BECOME A DIPLOMAT, TOKIWA-SAN?

I DON'T HAVE THE CONFI-DENCE
THAT FATHER'S POLICY WAS THE RIGHT ONE...
HATSUKO-SAMA OFTEN SAID THAT
IN WHAT SENSE?
I DON'T KNOW WHAT SHE MEANT BY THAT.
IN THE END, FATHER WILL SINK THIS WHOLE COUNTRY.
BUT HATSUKO-SAMA USED TO SAY THE ROAD FATHER HAD CHOSEN WAS NO GOOD
NOT JUST THAT IT WASN'T THE BEST,
SHE THOUGHT IT WAS THE AB-SOLUTE WORST
THAT'S QUITE...
HATSUKO-SAMA WAS A VERY WISE WOMAN WHO UNDERSTOOD THE MECHA-NISMS OF THE COUNTRY AND THE SOCIETY VERY WELL.

IF SHE WENT SO FAR AS TO SAY SOMETHING LIKE THAT, I CAN'T HELP THINKING THAT SHE HAD SOLID GROUNDS FOR IT
THAT'S WHY I DON'T HAVE CONFIDENCE
THE DINING ROOM IS READY FOR YOU.
SAKE IS PREPARED BEFORE —
Woof!
!
Woof!
Woof!
Woof!

NO
Woof!
DID YOU UNLEASH THEM?
I KNEW GUESTS WERE COMING, SO I HAD THEM LOCKED IN THE SHED, BUT...
THE LOCK THERE IS QUITE LOOSE, SO MAYBE THEY BROKE FREE.
MATSUOU-MARU, UME-OUMARU
WHAT IS IT?
PROBABLY SOME CAT SNEAKED IN.
I'M GOING TO CHAIN THEM.
YES, PLEASE DO
ALL THREE OF THEM.
YES.

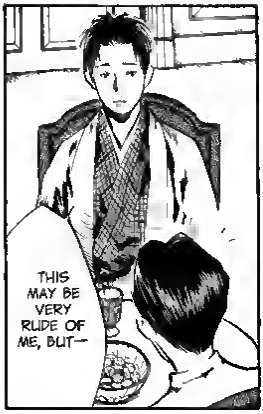
AKITA DOGS, RIGHT? WATCH DOGS?
I JUST KEEP THEM BECAUSE I LIKE THEM
BUT FOR SAFETY'S SAKE, WE LET ONE OF THEM OFF THE LEASH EVERY NIGHT.

THEY DON'T BITE, BUT THEY ARE TEMPERAMENTAL AND STRONG.
THE SERVANTS HAVE A HARD TIME BRINGING THEM BACK TO THE SHED EVERY MORNING.

AL-THOUGH THEY ARE QUITE DOCILE WITH ME.
IS THAT SO?

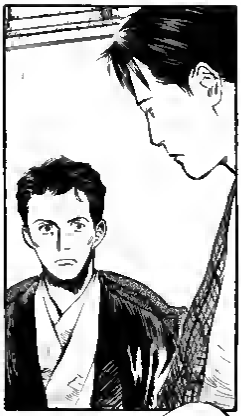
AH, THAT WAS A REAL TREAT.
YESTERDAY, WE IMPOSED ON YOU QUITE A LOT, SO I WAS WORRIED HOW YOU ARE DOING..
THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
I'M PER-FECTLY ALL RIGHT NOW...
THERE'S SOMETHING I'VE BEEN WONDERING ABOUT...
WHO KNEW THAT SAKICHI-SAN WAS GOING TO THE IZAWA-YA?

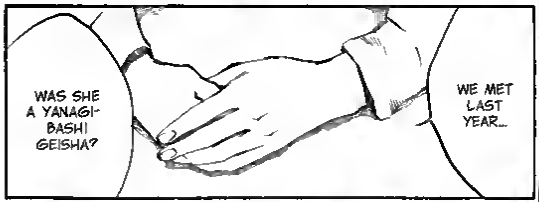
KIKUE-SAN WAS HERE AND WE WERE JUST ABOUT TO GO OUT TOGETHER WHEN THE RELATIVES CAME WITHOUT ANY WARNING
I THINK ONLY MY BROTHER AND THE RELATIVES WHO WERE HERE THAT DAY DID
HAD YOU MENTIONED ABOUT YOUR PLANS TO GO OUT WITH KIKUE-SAN TO ANYONE?
I DON'T REMEMBER TELLING ANYONE IN PARTICULAR
BUT ACTUALLY, THE MEETING BROKE UP ALMOST IMMEDIATELY AFTER SHE LEFT...
KIKUE-SAN WAITED FOR A PRETTY LONG TIME, BUT THE SHOPS WOULD HAVE CLOSED IF SHE KEPT ON WAITING AND SO I ASKED SAKICHI-SAN TO GO WITH HER
I SEE
I THINK THE CANOPY WAS TO MY RIGHT...
YES, I WAS
SAKICHI-SAN, WERE YOU FAR FROM THE CANOPY HANGING BELOW THE BALCONY WHERE YOU WERE STANDING?
I WANT TO VERIFY ONE THING

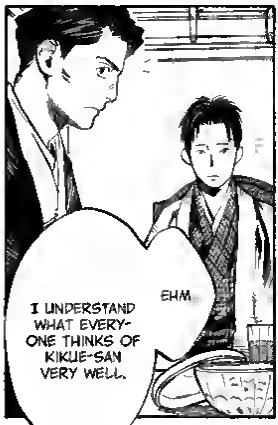


SO SAKICHI-SAN WAS REALLY ATTACKED BY MISTAKE.

THE PROBLEM WAS, WAS HE MISTAKEN FOR TOKIWA-SAN OR KIKUE-SAN...?



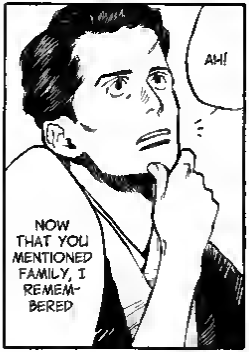


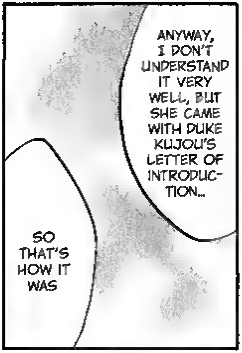


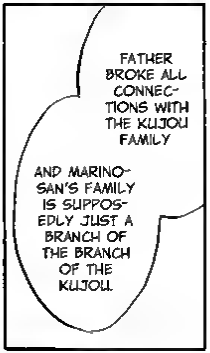
BUT SHE'S JUST ANGRY BECAUSE MY RELATIVES KEEP MAKING MALICIOUS REMARKS ABOUT HER
AS YOU KNOW, SHE IS STRONG-WILLED AND SOMETIMES VERY SHARP-TONGUED
SHE TENDS TO PICK FIGHTS WITH MY RELATIVES ALL THE TIME.
SHE DIDN'T BECAME A GEISHA BECAUSE SHE WANTED TO
SHE ENTERED THAT WORLD BECAUSE WHEN HER FAMILY DECLINED, SHE WAS SOLD TO A GEISHA HOUSE TO FEED HER PARENTS AND BROTHERS
EVEN MY FATHER, WHEN HE WAS ALIVE, SAID THAT THE SYSTEM OF SELLING PEOPLE IS SAVAGE I THINK THE SAME.
EVERYONE TREATS KIKUE-SAN AS IF THAT WAS HER FAULT
TO ME, SHE IS GENTLE AND LOVELY
SHE EVEN CRIED AND APOLOGIZED ABOUT THE UGLY RUMORS ABOUT ME THAT STARTED TO SPREAD BECAUSE OF HER. I BELIEVE IN HER FEELINGS

DO YOU WANT HER FOR A WIFE?
YES.
BUT THE IMPERIAL HOUSEHOLD DEPARTMENT WOULD NOT ALLOW IT.
BUT THERE ISN'T ANY PROBLEM ABOUT MARRYING MARINO-SAN, CORRECT?
SPEAKING OF WHICH, I FORGOT TO ASK YOU,
BUT DO YOU KNOW MY BROTHER AND MARINO-SAN?
YES.
WE RAN INTO HIM AT USHIGOME...
YES
IT SEEMS THAT MARINO-SAN WISHES TO MARRY NAOSHI-SAN VERY MUCH.
ACTUALLY, FATHER LEFT HER TO ME. BUT WHEN I ASKED HER TO MOVE BACK HERE, SHE DIDN'T LISTEN
WE HEARD SHE'S FROM THE KUJOU FAMILY?
YES, THAT'S WHAT I HEARD.

WHAT DID YOU HEAR?
I'M NOT SO SURE MYSELF TO WHAT EXTEND SHE IS RELATED TO ME.
I HEARD THAT SHE'S FROM GRANDFATHER'S REAL FAMILY, OR A GRANDCHILD OF THE FAMILY OF SOME OF GREAT-GRANDFATHER'S BROTHERS OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT


AH!
NOW THAT YOU MENTIONED FAMILY, I REMEMBERED


ANYWAY, I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT VERY WELL, BUT SHE CAME WITH DUKE KUJOU'S LETTER OF INTRODUCTION...
SO THAT'S HOW IT WAS

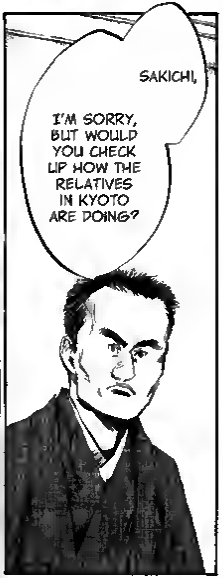

FATHER BROKE ALL CONNECTIONS WITH THE KUJOU FAMILY
AND MARINO-SAN'S FAMILY IS SUPPOSEDLY JUST A BRANCH OF THE BRANCH OF THE KUJOU

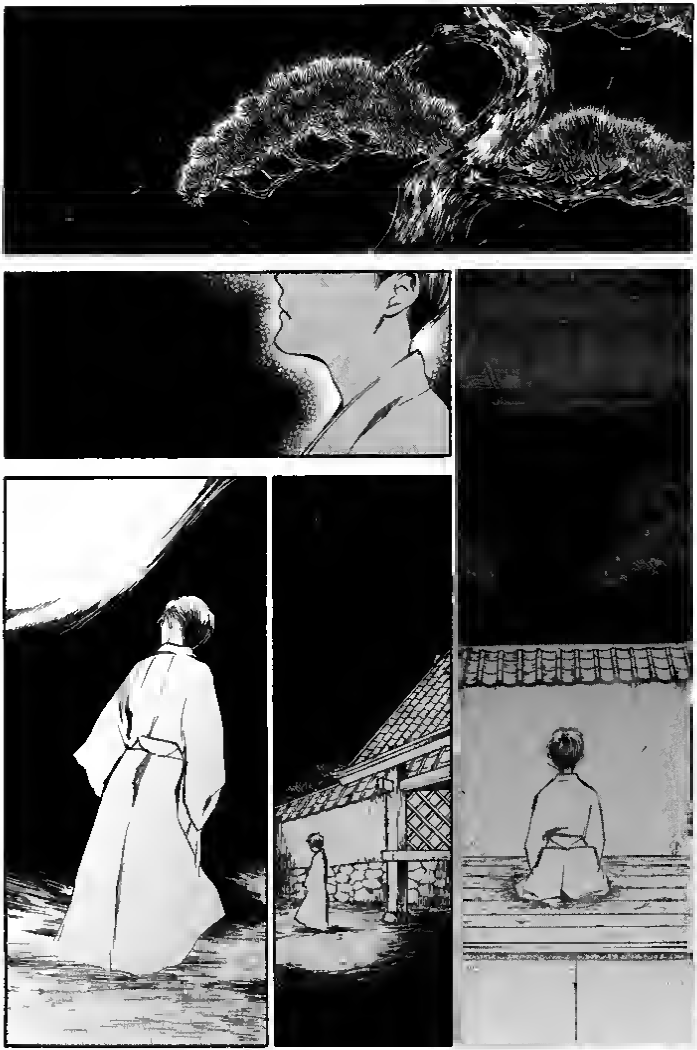
HAVE YOU HEARD OF THIS?
NO

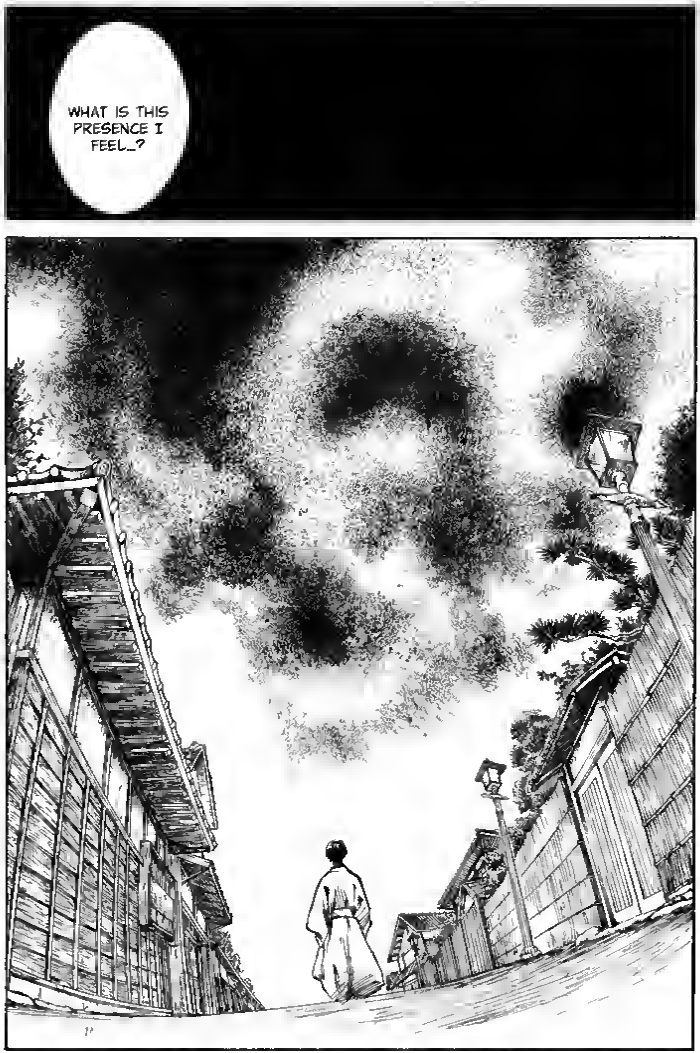
WE HEARD THAT NAOSHI-SAN MET KOZATO-SAN AND TASUKU-SAN AT GINZA...

THE PEOPLE FROM KYOTO ARE HERE, IN THE CAPITAL, RIGHT?
YOU MEAN KOZATO-SAMA?

IF THEY ARE INTENTIONALLY HIDING THEM-SELVES...






WHAT IS THIS PRESENCE I FEEL..?

THIRD ACT.
MIDNIGHT
GARDEN.
THE FISH ARE
GOING ROUND.

It was a very dark road.
That's why at first when I saw the lights I was honestly relieved.
I hurried ahead so that I could walk close to it.

WAS I SUPPOSED TO KEEP WALKING BEHIND HIM OR_?
BUT WHEN I DID ?
HEY...
HEY, YOU!

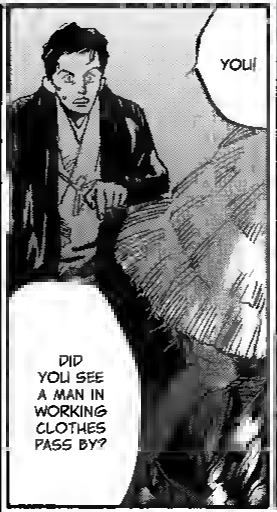
WAIT!
YOU!
THE HUMAN SOULS SELLER!
THAT WAS UNDOUBTEDLY THE NOTORIOUS HUMAN SOULS SELLER!

HUFF
HUFF
...
YOU, WAIT THERE.

I'M SURE HE WENT THIS WAY...
IM-POS-SIBLE...

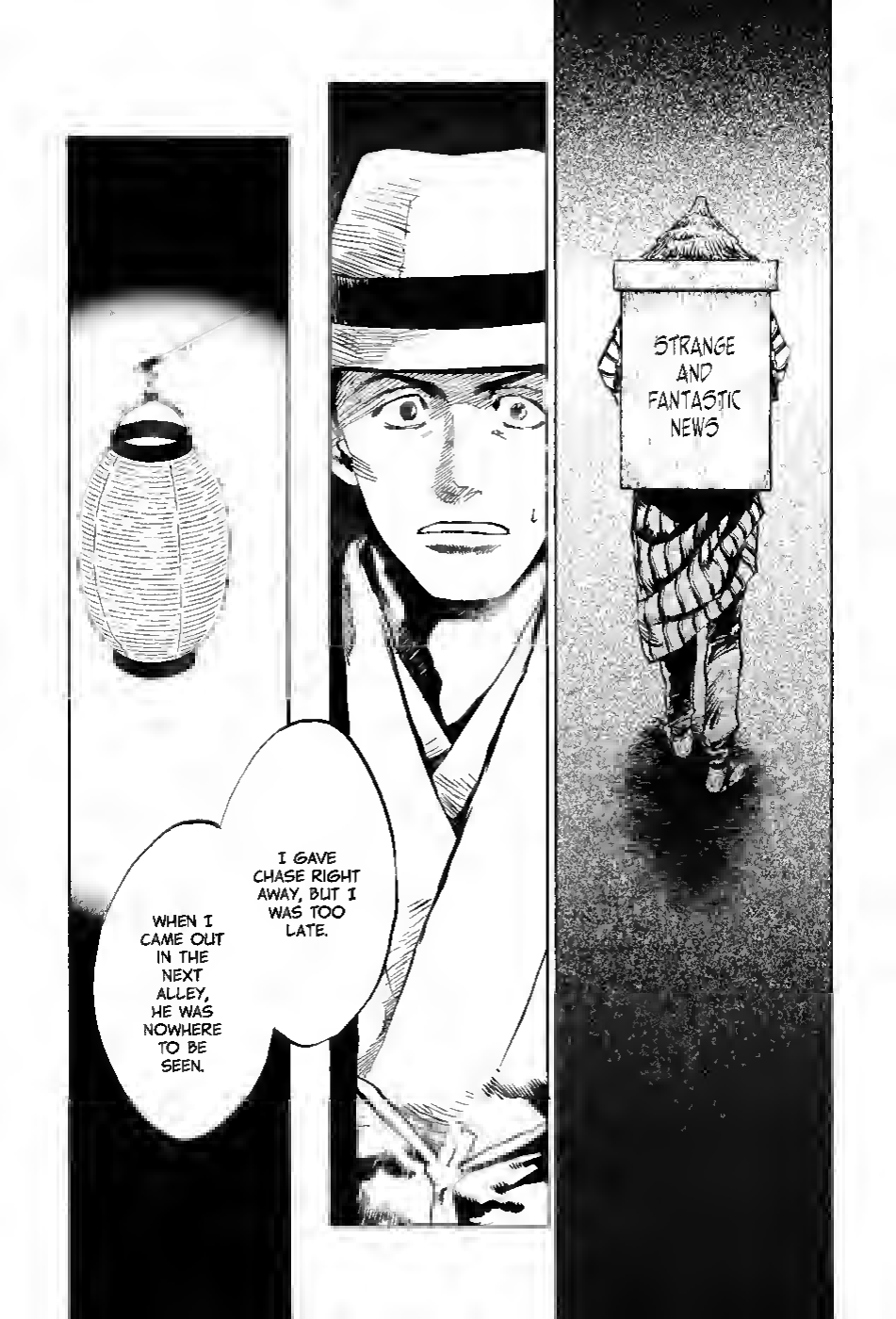
NOT HIM...?

NO


YOU!
DID YOU SEE A MAN IN WORKING CLOTHES PASS BY?

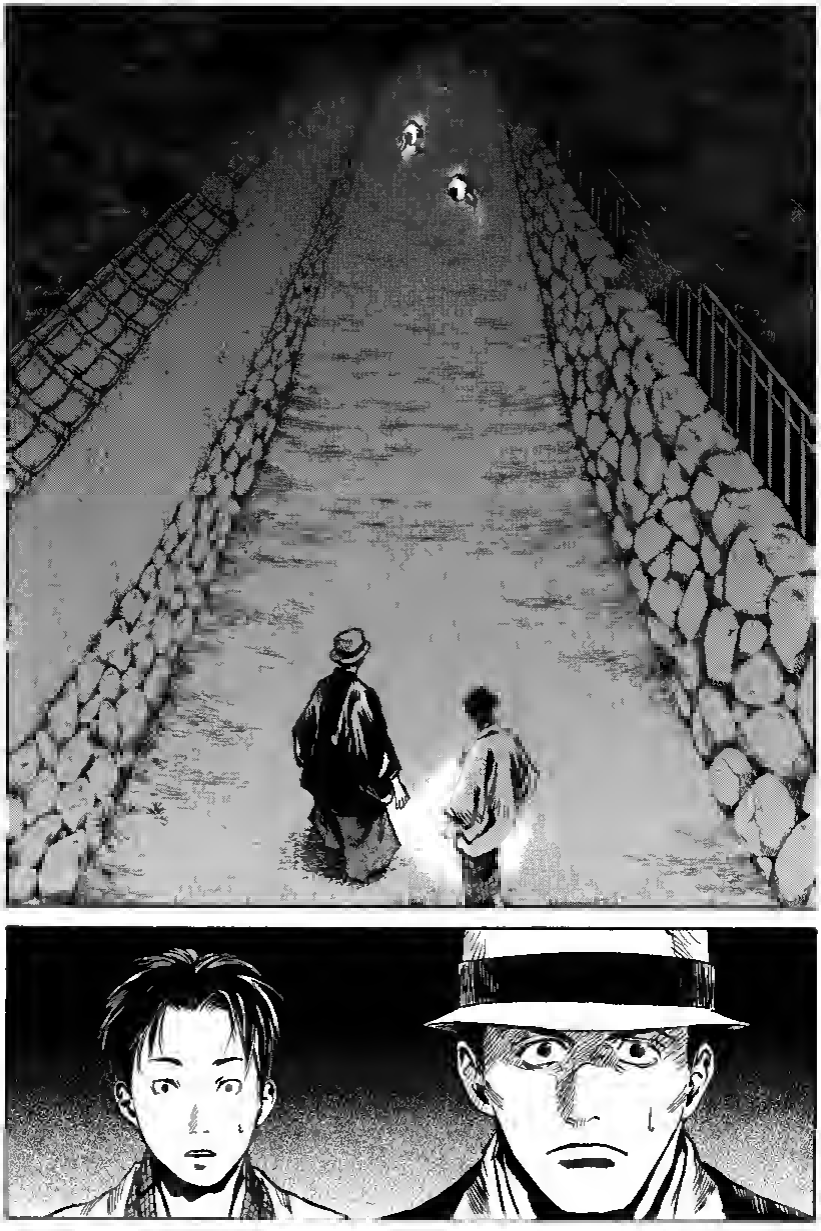
I WAS FOLLOW-ING HIM ON HIS HEELS.
THAT'S IMPOS-SIBLE... I JUST SAW HIM.
NO, NOBODY HAS BEEN HERE.
HE CAME THIS WAY, DIDN'T HE?
HE HAD A BAG SLUNG OVER HIS SHOULDER.
WHAT THE...?

...
RATTLE
RATTLE
CLANK
WHY ARE YOU IN SUCH A DEAD END LITTLE ALLEY?
DOING MY BUSI-NESS
WHERE DID YOU COME FROM?
!


STRANGE AND FANTASTIC NEWS
I GAVE CHASE RIGHT AWAY, BUT I WAS TOO LATE.
WHEN I CAME OUT IN THE NEXT ALLEY, HE WAS NOWHERE TO BE SEEN.

I WONDER WHERE THAT HUMAN SOULS SELLER WENT...
SO THAT'S WHAT HAP-PENED...
THERE WAS A SOLID LOCK ON THE GATES AND I MADE SURE IT WASN'T BROKEN.
THE EARTHEN WALL WAS OLD AND THERE WERE EVEN ROOF TILES ON TOP
IF HE TRIED TO CLIMB IT, IT'D CRUMBLE.
LOOKS LIKE
HE REALLY DISAP-PEARED.
IS THAT SO...?

OR
MAYBE THERE'S SOMETHING I FAILED TO SEE...
MANZOU-KUN



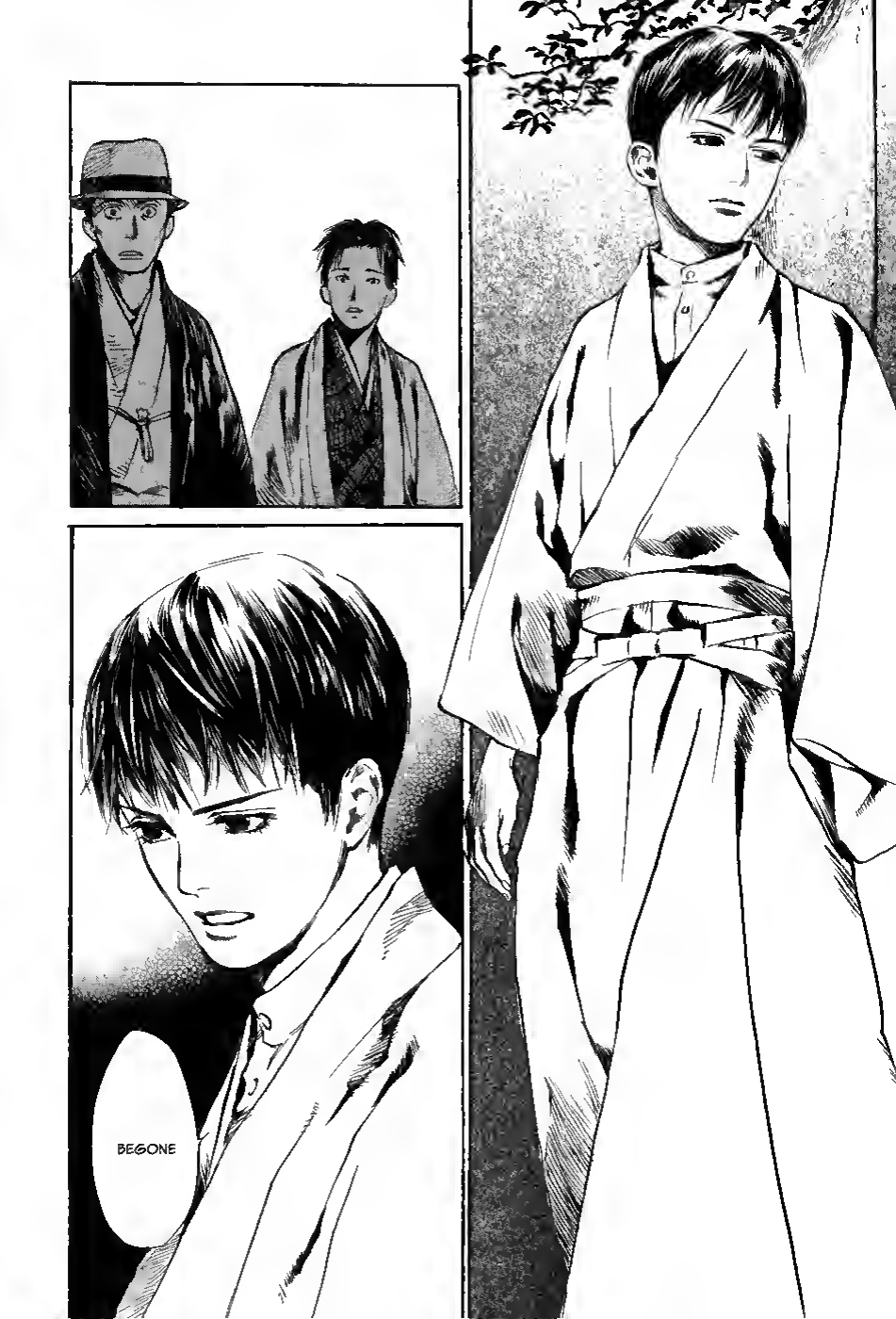
THOSE ARE..
LET'S GO BACK!

!!!
The Swords-man...!

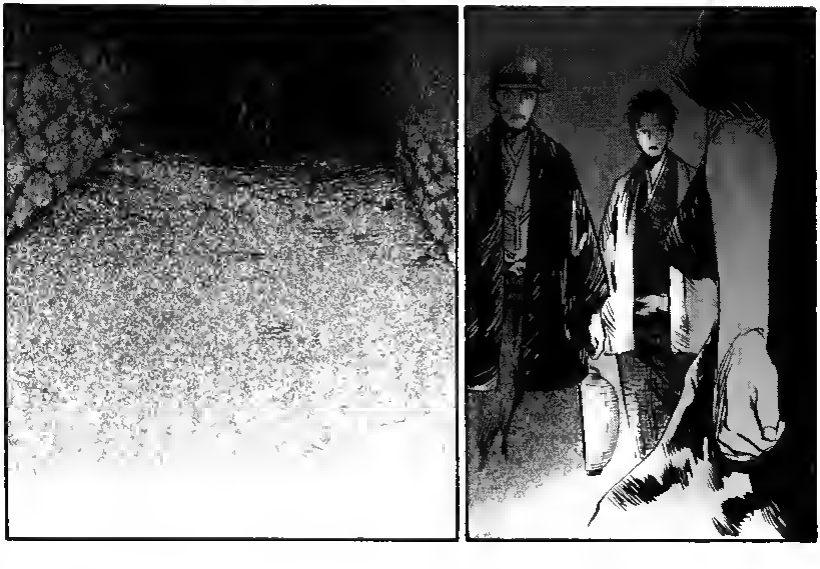
YES.
HE KILLED FOUR PEOPLE. THIS MAN.
Four people...
No mistake about this,
he killed four people. This man.

DOWN IS NOT GOOD
WE NEED TO GO UP...
STAGGER

!
STOP.


BEGONE

I LET THIS PASS TONIGHT, BUT NEXT TIME WE MEET, THERE WILL BE NO MERCY
YOU TOO, KUBI-TSUKAI.
THERE SHALL BE NO MORE SLAUGHTER
DISAPPEAR AND NEVER COME BACK



THEY RE GONE...
REFRAIN FROM GOING OUT IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT
YOU...

I WON'T BE AROUND TO SAVE YOU FOREVER.
WAIT A MINUTE!
WHO ARE YOU?!
I'M NOBODY AS IMPORTANT AS TO HAVE A FAMILY NAME.
BUT MY PERSONAL NAME IS TASUKU.
!

IS HE...?
YES, I DON'T THINK IT'S JUST A COINCIDENCE OF NAMES
THAT WAS TAKATSUKASA TASUKU
HE WAS...

...
MANZOU-KUN...
I DIDN'T BELIEVE IN GHOSTS UNTIL TONIGHT..
BUT THEN WHAT WAS IT THAT WE JUST SAW?
WHAT IS HAPPENING TO THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL LATELY?
WHEN DID THE NIGHT BECOME SO DANGEROUS?
PLEASE, CALM DOWN, HIRAKA-WA-SAN

HIRA-KAWA-SAN?
NOTHING WAS "ENLIGHT-ENED."
ISN'T THIS A NEW ERA? ISN'T THIS THE AGE OF ENLIGHTEN-MENT?
DIDN'T WE DISPERSE THE DARKNESS WITH ELECTRIC AND GAS LAMPS?
SPEAKING ABOUT EQUALITY OF THE FOUR STRATA MEANS NOTHING.
WE'RE JUST PRETENDING THAT A NEW ERA HAS COME.
JUST AS I SAW FROM THE TOP OF THE JUUNIKAI...
THE DARKNESS THAT ALWAYS LODGED OVER THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL IS STILL HERE.

I'M NOT A CHILD TO CRY BECAUSE I'M SCARED OF THE DARK.
BUT MANZOU-KUN,
WHY DOESN'T THE NIGHT RETREAT EVEN THOUGH WE KEEP GOING ON ABOUT ENLIGHT-ENMENT?
WASN'T A NEW, BETTER ERA SUP-POSED TO COME?
IT'S JUST A MONKEY SHOW OF "ENLIGHT-ENMENT."
WASN'T THE NEW WORLD SUPPOSED TO BE RID OF ALL THE OLD ABOMINA-TIONS AND TURN INTO A RATIONAL MODERN WORLD OF EQUALITY FOR EVERYONE?
THE WHOLE "OPENING UP" WAS A LIE.

EVERY TIME A BIG FIRE BREAKS OUT, THE CITY TURNS TO ASHES
PEOPLE DIE FROM CHOLERA AND TYPHUS LIKE FALLING DOMINO PIECES
THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RICH AND POOR IS STILL VERY BIG.
YES. EVERYONE IS JUST PRETENDING THAT A NEW ERA HAS COME.

A RELIC FROM THE PAST.
ONE OF THE THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN EATING THIS COUNTRY FROM THE INSIDE, LIKE A WORM.
HI-RAKAWA-SAN...
MONSTERS ARE.

NOTHING LIKE A NEW ERA WILL EVER COME...
IF THE ENLIGHTENMENT CANNOT CURB THEM, THAN WHAT CAN IT DO ABOUT ALL THE OTHER THINGS?
THE OLD ABOMINATIONS WILL CHANGE THEIR SHAPE AND KEEP SQUIRMING AND CRAWLING AROUND US, WON'T THEY?
IF A NEW, BETTER WORLD IS NOT ABOUT TO COME, THEN WHERE'S THE SENSE IN ALL THESE INNOVATIONS?

IF HUMAN STRENGTH CANNOT CHANGE THE ERA, THEN FOR WHAT REASON ARE HUMANS TRAPPED IN THEIR TIME?
IT'S LIKE DYING WITHOUT HAVING LIVED.
IS THIS ALL THAT WE'RE WORTH?!
CALM DOWN, HIRAKAWA-SAN.

I... HATED MY FATHER
A FEUDAL LORD IS JUST A TITLE, HE WASN'T EVEN ANYONE IMPORTANT, AND YET, HE DIED TO SHOW HIS LOYALTY TO HIS FEUDAL LORD
MY FATHER WAS A LOW LEVEL VASSAL OF THE AIZU FEUDAL LORD...
HE DIED IN THE BOSHIN WAR*
MY YOUNGER SISTER AND BROTHER DIED BEFORE WE DRIFTED HERE, TO THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL WE WERE SO POOR THAT WE COULDN'T EVEN AFFORD TO FEED THEM
MAYBE HE WAS CONTENT WITH THAT, BUT DID HE REALIZE WHAT HIS FAMILY HAD TO GO THROUGH AFTER THAT?
I THOUGHT THAT A NEW, FREE AND BETTER ERA IS COMING
RAILWAY, BRICK BUILDINGS, GAS STREETLIGHTS... SAMURAI AND FEUDAL LORDS DIDN'T MATTER AT ALL
WHEN I CAME TO THE CAPITAL, IT WAS LIKE STEPPING INTO A DREAM

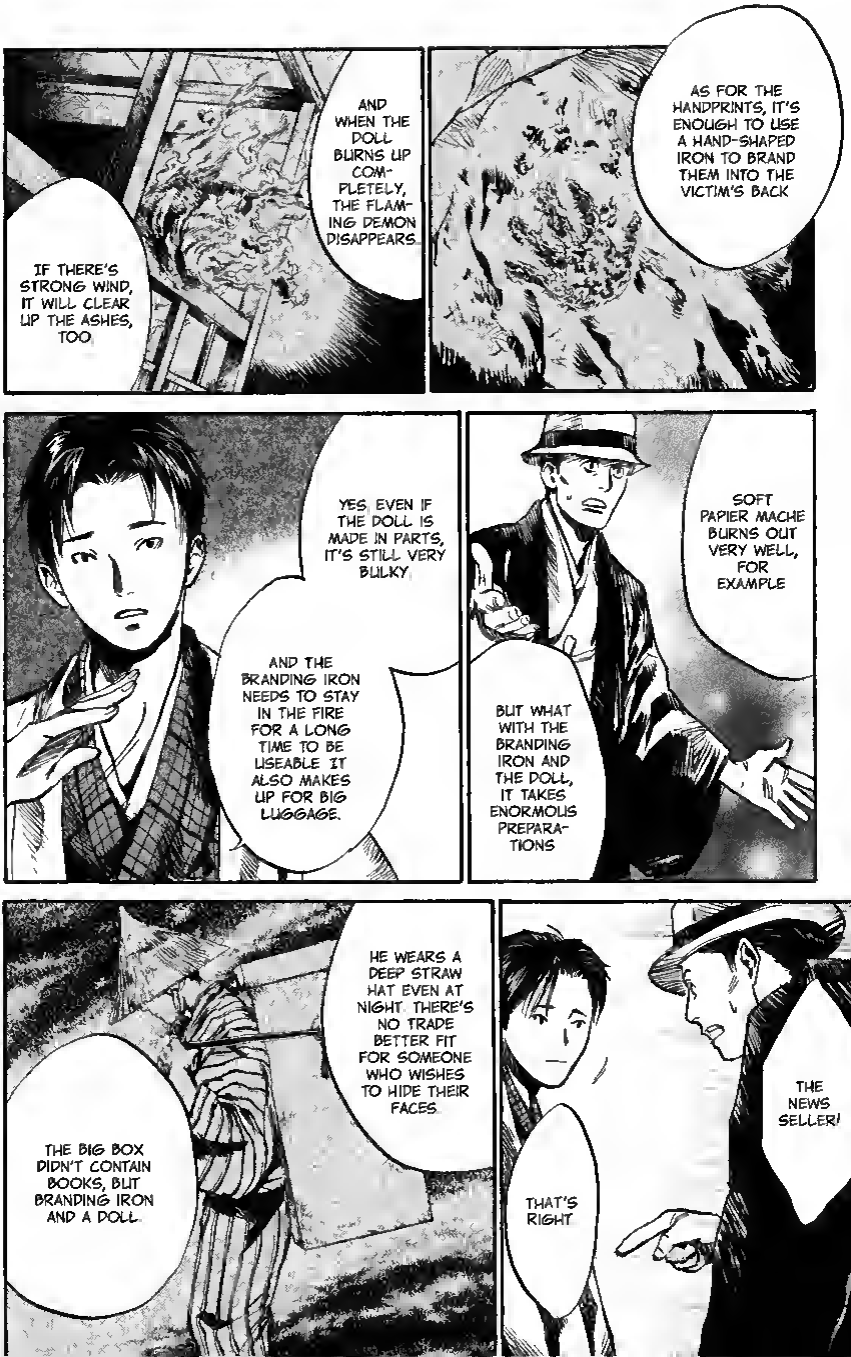
*NOTE 1868-1869, THE CIVIL WAR IN WHICH THE NEW MEIJI GOVERNMENT FINISHED OFF THE LAST OF THE PRO-TOKUGAWA LOYALISTS

NO MATTER IS THE TIMES WILL BECOME BETTER OR WORSE, THEY ARE CHANGING
MAYBE I... DREAMED TOO MUCH OF THAT NEW ERA.
NO MATTER WHERE IT IS GOING,
IT IS CHANGING
THEN THE HUMAN SOULS SELLER I SAW IS..
HUMAN, OF COURSE
MANZOU-KUN, YOU... DO YOU BELIEVE IN MONSTERS.. GHOSTS AND ALL OTHER HORRORS?
I DO NOT

BUT THAT MAN DISAPPEARED!
BUT IN RETURN, THERE WAS THE NEWS SELLER..
IS IT IMPOSSIBLE TO THINK HE TOOK OFF HIS HUMAN SOULS SELLER DISGUISE AND PUT ON HIS NEWS SELLER ONE?
FLUORESCENT MUSHROOMS OR SOME SORT OF MOSS
OR YOU COULD PUT PHOSPHORUS IN A GLASS BALL AND CONTROL IT WITH STRINGS
ANYWAY, THERE ARE PLENTY OF THINGS THAT EMIT A GLOW
BUT IF THOSE WEREN'T REAL SOULS, THEN...
SOMETHING THE SIZE OF AN ADULT'S FIST AND GLOWING..
IN ORDER TO HIDE HIS FACE FROM YOU, HE JUST HAD TO MAKE SURE YOU DIDN'T SEE THROUGH HIS DISGUISE, NO MATTER WHICH ONE OF THE TWO IT WAS
THE HUMAN SOULS SELLER YOU WERE TAILING RAN INTO THAT LITTLE DEAD END ALLEY TO TO BECOME THE NEWS SELLER BECAUSE THAT'S WHERE HE HAD SECRETED HIS DISGUISE.
AS FOR THE KUBITSUKAI, THINK WHAT IT WOULD LOOK LIKE IN THIS DARKNESS IF YOU ONLY PAINTED THE HEAD WHITE AND DRESSED THE REST OF YOUR BODY IN BLACK.
HE SWORDSMAN IS SOMEONE WHO CAN ONLY PROVE HE IS A SAMURAI BY CUTTING OFF PEOPLE'S HEADS.
PLEASE, CALM DOWN.
THERE'S NO SUCH THINGS AS MONSTERS.

THE KUROKO SPOKE WITH HIS DOLL AND IT MOVED EVEN THOUGH HE WASN'T DIRECTING IT, SO IT COULD HAVE BEEN A CHILD...
OF COURSE, THE VOICE COULD BE CHANGED THE HANDS COULD BE MADE OF PAPIER MACHE AND SEWED TO THE KIMONO OF A DOLL.
YES...
YOU'RE RIGHT, IT'S TRUE...
ARE YOU FEELING CALMER NOW?
OF COURSE, THERE'S NO SUCH THINGS AS MONSTERS IN THIS WORLD
OF COURSE NOT
BUT YAMIGOZEN AND THE FLAMING DEMON
EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE PROBABLY HUMAN, THEY AREN'T JUST ORDINARY HUMANS
YAMIGOZEN'S CLAWS ARE IRON AND THE BEATS IS SOME DOG OR FOX OR OTHER DOMESTIC ANIMAL
BUT YAMIGOZEN DISAPPEARED INTO THE DARKNESS!
THERE'S NOTHING EXTRAORDINARY ABOUT THAT
EVEN IF SHE TOOK OFF HER DISGUISE, AN AKAHIME KIMONO IS VERY BULKY
TAKING IT OFF IS VERY DIFFICULT, TOO EVEN WIPING OFF THAT THICK WHITE MAKEUP IS NO SIMPLE TASK

AS FOR THE MAKE UP, IT COMES OFF WITH JUST A LITTLE WATER
WATER...
THERE'S SUCH A THING AS QUICK CHANGE IN STAGE ATTIRE.
YOU TEAR ONE STRING AND THE WHOLE OUTFIT COMES OFF
AND THE HAIRDO IS A WIG, SO YOU JUST PULL IT OFF
THE HANNYA SOBA STAND...?
YES THE KIMONO AND THE WIG CAN BE SAFELY HIDDEN IN IT
AND THERE ARE PLENTY OF RAINWATER BARRELS IN ASAKUSA.
IF YOU TAKE OFF THE WIG AND FOLD THE KIMONO INNER SIDE OUT, YOU DON'T STAND OUT.
THAT'S RIGHT... THE OWNER OF THE SOBA STAND DIDN'T SEEM TO BE THE LEAST INCLINED TO DO BUSINESS... HE ASKED FOR THAT EXUBERANT PRICE BECAUSE THE CUSTOMER WAS IN THE WAY.
THAT'S WHAT I THINK, TOO
THEN WHAT ABOUT THE FLAMING DEMON?
THAT MUST BE A DOLL.


AND WHEN THE DOLL BURNS UP COMPLETELY, THE FLAMING DEMON DISAPPEARS.
IF THERE'S STRONG WIND, IT WILL CLEAR UP THE ASHES, TOO.
AS FOR THE HANDPRINTS, IT'S ENOUGH TO USE A HAND-SHAPED IRON TO BRAND THEM INTO THE VICTIM'S BACK
YES, EVEN IF THE DOLL IS MADE IN PARTS, IT'S STILL VERY BULKY.
AND THE BRANDING IRON NEEDS TO STAY IN THE FIRE FOR A LONG TIME TO BE USEABLE. IT ALSO MAKES UP FOR BIG LUGGAGE.
SOFT PAPIER MACHE BURNS OUT VERY WELL, FOR EXAMPLE
BUT WHAT WITH THE BRANDING IRON AND THE DOLL, IT TAKES ENORMOUS PREPARATIONS
HE WEARS A DEEP STRAW HAT EVEN AT NIGHT. THERE'S NO TRADE BETTER FIT FOR SOMEONE WHO WISHES TO HIDE THEIR FACES.
THE BIG BOX DIDN'T CONTAIN BOOKS, BUT BRANDING IRON AND A DOLL.
THE NEWS SELLER!
THAT'S RIGHT.

THEN..
THEN THE ONE I MET..
BUT NONE OF THIS TELLS US WHO DID IT...
WAS NONE OTHER THAN THE FLAMING DEMON

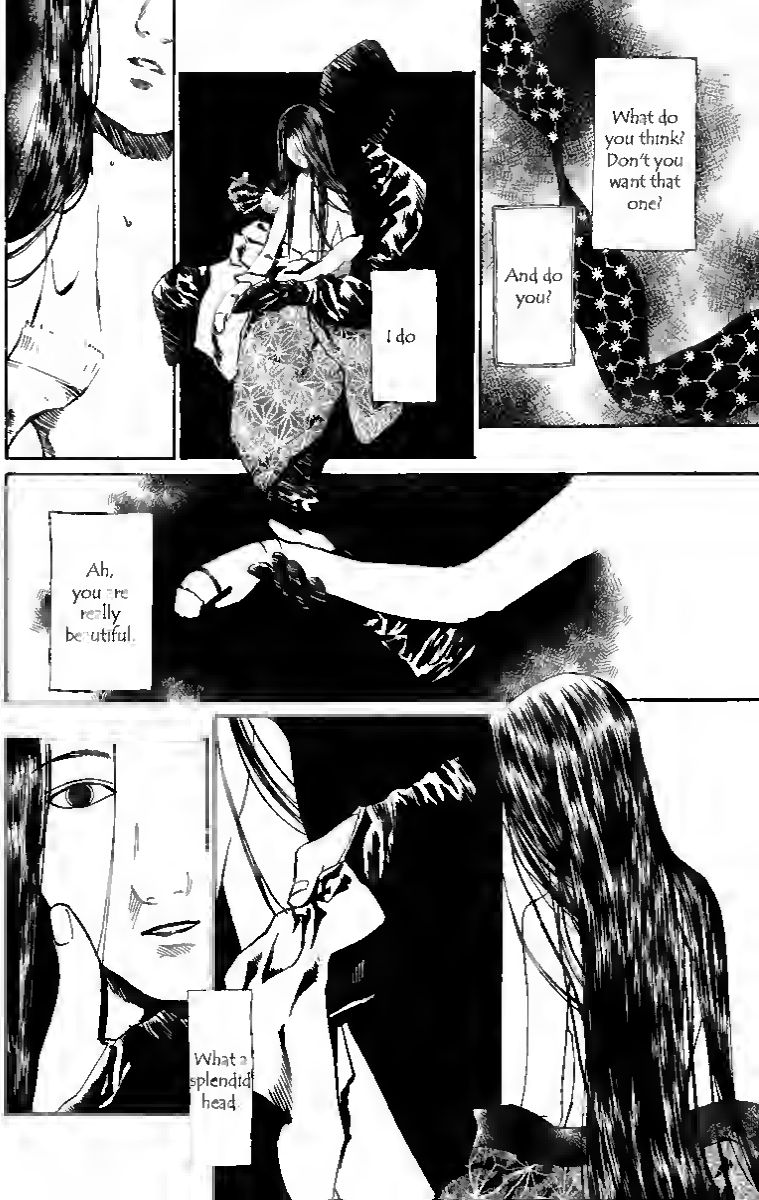
第四幕　夜の者、満願成就の場(一)

Fourth Act.

When the earnest
prayers of the creatures of the night are answered. (Part 1)

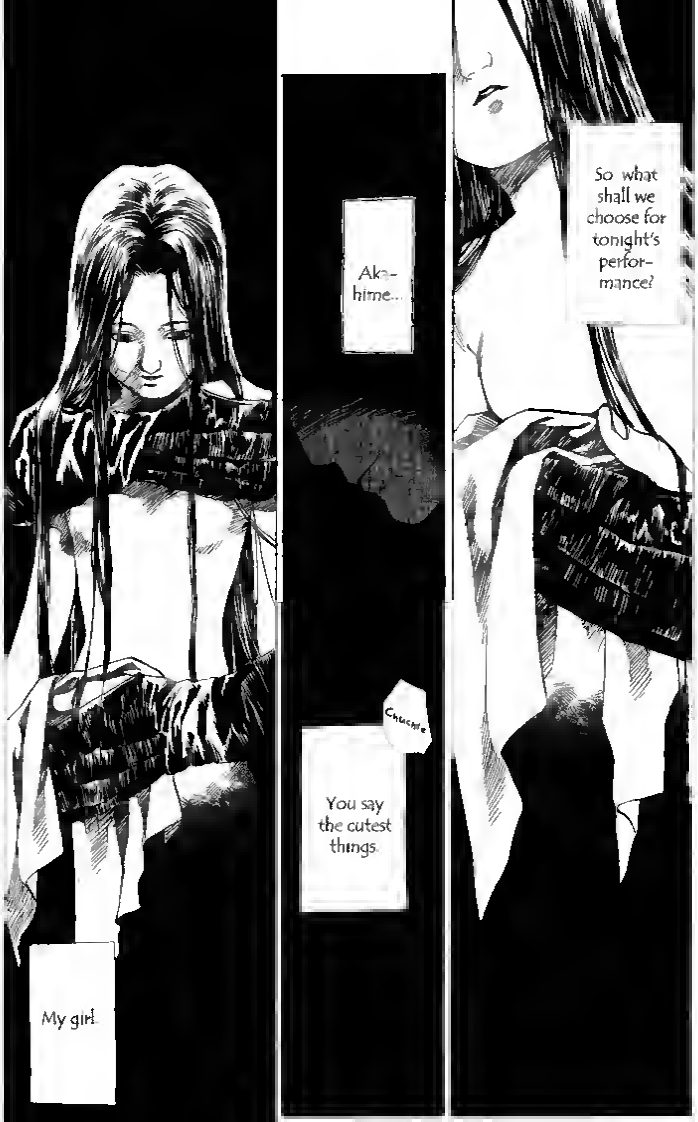
Good girl.
Bear with it just a little more.
.....
Are you tired?
Ah, what beautiful hair
Is that... your goal?

Such a wonderful creature of the night wasn't it?
That was a creature of the night?
You are a full-fledged member of that kind too. You should be able to tell.


What do you think? Don't you want that one?
And do you?
I do
Ah, you're really beautiful.
What a splendid head

Your face truly is the face of darkness

The loveliness and beauty of your features,
the thick and glossy hair
Nobody can measure up to you


So what shall we choose for tonight's performance?
Aka-hime...
Chuckle
You say the cutest things.
My girl.

I understand how taken in you are with that
so I will do what you ask
I want wings. I want feathers. I want to fly away. I want to know...
The night when all your earnest prayers come true is approaching

What are you ?
From now on,

the curtains are rising for the real tragedy.
CHATTER
CHATTER
...FELL FROM THE FIVE-STOREY PAGODA...
...THE FLAMING DEMON WAS ON TOP...

NAOSHI...

BROTHER
WHY..?
NAOSHI...
DO YOU KNOW THIS MAN?
HE'S MY BROTH-ER...

MY CONDO-LENCES...
WHERE'S YOUR HOUSE? WE HAVE TO INFORM HIS FAMILY
TAKATSU-KASA
WHAT...?!
WHY...?
THIS IS DUKE TAKAT-SUKASA.
WHY DID THIS HAVE TO HAPPEN...?!
WHY?!

AAAA!
Huff
Huff
Huff
AAAAA!

I'M—
I'M SORRY, I HEARD THE FLAMING DEMON APPEARED!
YES, AT THE PAGODA.
CHATTER
CHATTER
SAKICHI-SAN!
HIRAKAWA-SAN, MANZOU-SAN

AHH, SO TOKIWA-SAN IS ALL RIGHT.
WE HEARD IT WAS A DUKE WHO FELL AND I WAS SURE—
WHO'S HE..?
NAOSHI-SAMA.

TOKIWA-SAN...
HIRA-KAWA-SAN...
WHAT HAPPENED TO NAOSHI..?
THE FLAMING DEMON APPEARED ON THE PAGODA...
WHEN WE REACHED THE FIFTH FLOOR, SUDDENLY FLAMING HANDS APPEARED...
DID HE DO THIS TO NAOSHI-SAN?
NAOSHI TOLD ME AND SAKICHI-SAN TO RUN..

I LET BROTHER SACRIFICE HIMSELF BEFORE MY VERY EYES...
IT'S MY FAULT...

NAOSHI-SAN...
HE PROBABLY MANAGED TO GRAB THAT BRANDING IRON AS HE FELL...

IN THE VERY END, NAOSHI-SAN WILL RETURN TO THE TAKATSUKASA PRINCIPAL HOUSE.
HOW IRONIC...
MANZOU-KUN.
IS SOME-THING WRONG?
NO, I WAS JUST TALKING TO SOME PEOPLE...
YOU TWO, COULD YOU PLEASE TELL HIRAKAWA-SAN WHAT YOU TOLD ME?
I'M ON DUTY AT THE PAGODA.
THE TRUTH IS, THE SUM DOESN'T ADD UP.
EH?
FOUR PEOPLE WENT IN THE TOWER WHEN THE STUDENT FELL DOWN.
THAT IS, WHEN THE FLAMING DEMON APPEARED, A CULTURED-LOOKING YOUNG MAN AND SMALL FELLOW WITH AN EVIL MUG CAME RUSHING OUT, ASKING ME FOR HELP.

HE WAS.
THERE WAS SOMETHING GLOWING INSIDE.
THE LAST MAN, DRESSED AS A WORKER, DID NOT COME OUT.
MAN IN WORKER'S KIMONO..?!
WAS HE CARRYING A SILK GAUZE SACK, BY ANY CHANCE?
HOW RUDE! I'M A VERY EARNEST PERSON AND I WAS DOING MY GUARDING JOB PROPERLY
WHEN THERE WAS A COMMOTION AT THE BELL TOWER AND WHEN PEOPLE STARTED SCREAMING SOMEONE HAD FALLEN DOWN, I NEVER MOVED FROM MY SPOT.
BUT IT DISAPPEARED AS SOON AS HE STEPPED IN THE TOWER
YOU MEAN, YOU LOST HIM FROM SIGHT?
A COMMOTION AT THE BELL TOWER?
YES.
OVER THE TOWER... THAT IS, IN MIDAIR,
FOUR LIT LANTERNS WERE FLOATING

WHAT'S THIS?! PAPIER MACHE HEAD ATTACHED TO A FLOATING BALLOON!
NO, NO, THAT WAS A COMPLETE FABRICATION...
EVERYONE WAS STARING AT THE BELL TOWER. IT WAS A BIG COMMOTION.
AND AMONG THEM, THREE-SEVERED HEADS...
HEADS?!
KIDS!
I REMEMBER THREE KIDS CLIMBING TO THE BELL TOWER BEFORE.
!!!
THEY WERE WAITING FOR HIM TO GIVE THEM THE MONEY FOR JOB WELL DONE HE HAD PROMISED THEM.
WHEN I QUESTIONED THEM, THEY SAID A CASUALLY DRESSED MAN IN DEEP STRAW HAT HAVE THEM LOOSE CHANGE AND ASKED THEM TO DO IT.
HEY, YOU THREE!

POOR GUYS
WHAT HAP-PENED TO THE KIDS?
SO, AS EXPECTED, THE NEWS SELLER APPEARED WHERE THE FLAMING DEMON WAS
AH!
THEY'LL GET SOME MOXA APPLIED, SO THEY'RE ROPED UP AT THE BELL TOWER
WHEN?
AT SUNSET... LONG BEFORE THE COMMO-TION AT THE BELL TOWER.
YES, YES, HE WAS STRANGE.
HE WENT INTO THE PAGODA. I REMEMBER HIM VERY WELL.
I SAW A NEWS SELLER, TOO
YOU DID? WHERE?

DIDN'T YOU CLIMB IN TO CHECK?
I ASKED HIM IF HE HAD FORGOTTEN IT.
AND THEN HE HAD THE AUDACITY TO SAY HE WASN'T CARRYING A BOX!
HE CARRIED IN A BIG WOODEN BOX ON HIS BACK, BUT THE BOX WAS GONE WHEN HE CAME OUT.
AH, YES
WE HAVE TO SEND THE LITTLE HOODLI-GANS HOME... DO YOU WANT TO SEE THEM?
I DO NOT LEAVE MY SPOT SO EASILY
MAYBE SOMEONE SET THEM FREE.
LOOKS LIKE THEY'VE RUN AWAY..
I'M SORRY
AH, LOOK

THIS AMAZAIKU* SELLER IS THE ONLY PERSON WITHIN THE PREMISES WHO SAW ANYTHING SUSPICIOUS
MANZOU-SAN! WE FOUND ONE
THEN I'LL TALK TO THEM WHENEVER YOU SEE THEM NEXT
RIGHT
AND I APOLOGIZE, BUT COULD YOU CLIMB THE PAGODA AND SEE IF YOU CAN FIND A WOODEN BOX WITH "STRANGE AND FANTASTIC NEWS" WRITTEN ON IT?
WE'RE SORRY TO TAKE UP OF YOUR TIME
*AMAZAIKU: CANDY LIKE SUBSTANCE MADE FROM SUGAR AND STARCH SYRUP, OFTEN FORMED IN HUMAN AND ANIMAL FORMS
THERE YOU ARE, BOY
SO, WHAT IS THE SUSPICIOUS THING YOU SAW?
JUST BEFORE THE COMMOTION AT THE BELL TOWER STARTED...

A PERSON?
WHAT'S THAT...?
DID SOMETHING FALL ON THE ROOF FROM THE FIFTH FLOOR...?
BUT THEN A CUSTOMER CAME AND WHEN I LOOKED BACK UP AGAIN, THE PERSON WAS GONE.
NO.
BUT YOU CAN'T TELL IF IT WAS A HUMAN OR NOT?
THE OPPOSITE SIDE TO THE BELL TOWER.
I SAW IT FROM THE SHOP, SO... EAST.
ON WHICH SIDE OF THE PAGODA WAS THE SHAPE YOU SAW?

WE SAW FLAMES GOING UP ON THE BALCONY.
THEY TOOK HUMAN SHAPE AND WHILE WE WERE WATCHING HORRIFIED, IT CRUMBLED AND DISAPPEARED.
AND THE FLAMING DEMON.
YES, HE WAS ON THE EAST SIDE.
DIDN'T YOU SEE A HUMAN SHAPE FIGHTING WITH THAT FLAMING DEMON?
NOTHING OF THE SORT THERE WAS NOBODY ANYWHERE CLOSE TO HIM.
IN A CRACK OF THE BANNISTER!
MANZOU-KUN! FOUND IT!
IS THAT SO? THANK YOU.

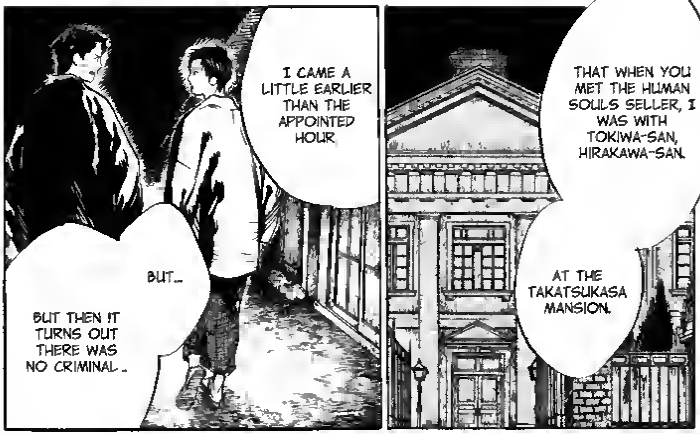
WHAT IN THE WORLD DO YOU THINK HAPPENED?
REALLY, A VERY GOOD QUESTION.
THE FLAMING DEMON, IN OTHER WORDS THE NEWS SELLER, PAID THE KIDS TO DO HIS TRICK SO THAT HE COULD GATHER ALL ATTENTION ON THE BELL TOWER
THERE WAS A BRAZIER ON THE BOTTOM AND I'M SURE THERE WAS A PAPIER MACHE DOLL ON TOP
THE NEWS SELLER'S BOX WAS EXACTLY WHAT YOU SAID IT WOULD BE
BUT...
THAT SOUNDS RIGHT HE MUST HAVE WANTED TO DISTRACT PEOPLE AWAY FROM THE PAGODA

SO FIRST THE CRIMINAL CALLED THEM OUT, THEN MADE THE PREPARATIONS
FIRST, HE ENTERED THE PAGODA IN HIS NEWS SELLER DISGUISE, HID HIS BOX AND WENT OUT
WHY WERE TOKIWA-SAN AND NAOSHI-SAN AT SUCH A PLACE?
WERE THEY CALLED THERE?
THE PREPARATIONS WERE MADE BEFORE THEY CAME, SO IT'S POSSIBLE.
AND THAT WAS THE SHAPE ON THE FOURTH FLOOR'S ROOF, RIGHT?
YES
HE WAS HIDING IT ON THE FIFTH FLOOR
THAT'S WHEN HE MUST HAVE MADE THE DOLL READY TO USE.
I SEE THEN HE ENTERED THE PAGODA AFTER NAOSHI-SAN,
TOKIWA-SAN AND TOKIWA-SAN'S ATTENDANT SAKICHI-SAN
THEN PREPARED THE DOLL IN THE WALL'S SHADOW AND ATTACKED AS USUAL...
HE PROBABLY DISGUISED HIMSELF AS THE HUMAN SOULS SELLER SO THAT HE'S NOT SUSPECTED WHEN HE ENTERED A SECOND TIME

NAOSHI-SAN REMAINED BEHIND, LETTING TOKIWA-SAN RUN AWAY AND THEN HE EITHER WAS PUSHED DOWN OR FELL OVER IN THE STRUGGLE...
BUT WE DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED THEN
WHAT DID THE CRIMINAL DO NEXT?
THE HUMAN SOULS SELLER LEFT THE TOWER, NOT THROUGH THE EXIT, BUT USING THE ROOFS
BEFORE THE FLAMING DEMON APPEARED AND THE PAGODA BECAME CENTER OF ATTENTION.
HOW ABOUT THIS TRAIN OF THOUGHT?
THEN THE THREE PEOPLE MUST HAVE BEEN MADE TO LOOK LIKE FOUR
MADE TO LOOK?
FOUR PEOPLE ENTERED, THREE CAME OUT.
IT SEEMS AS IF ONE DISAPPEARED, BUT PEOPLE DO NOT DISAPPEAR.

THERE MAY HAVE BEEN A ROPE INSIDE THE WOODEN BOX, USED TO CLIMB DOWN THE PAGODA.
HE DESCENDED SECRETLY, DISGUISED HIMSELF AS THE HUMAN SOULS SELLER AND ENTERED AGAIN AS IF NOTHING HAPPENED
YES SOMEONE PLAYED TWO PARTS
IN THIS SCENARIO, THE NUMBERS ARE ALL ACCOUNTED FOR, BUT...
WHEN INSIDE, HE HAD TO CHANGE BACK TO THE CLOTHES HE WORE BEFORE
HE COULD HAVE HIDDEN A SET OF SIMILAR CLOTHES INSIDE BEFORE-HAND
NAOSHI-SAN.
NAOSHI-SAN WAS MURDERED, SO IT'S NOT HIM.
THAT LEAVES TOKIWA-SAN OR SAKICHI-SAN...
BUT...
THIS MEANS ONE OF THOSE THREE IS THE CRIMINAL..

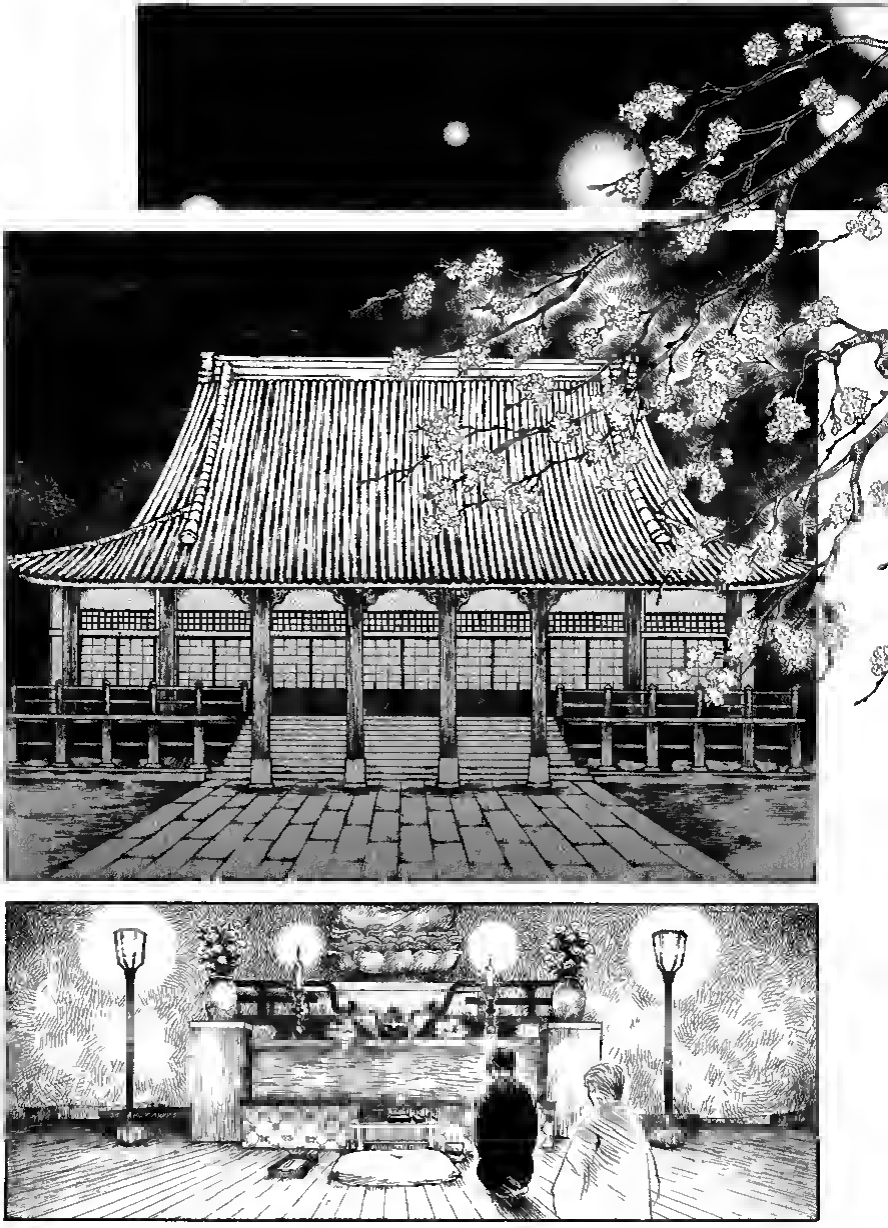
IF THEY SAID NOTHING, DOESN'T THAT MEAN THEY ARE BOTH CRIMINALS?
OR...
IF ONE OF THEM WAS THE CRIMINAL, THE OTHER ONE WOULD SAY SO
BUT THEY BOTH CAME RUSHING OUT TOGETHER
PLEASE, WAIT
AS WE SAID, THE FLAMING DEMON IS THE NEWS SELLER AND ALSO THE HUMAN SOULS SELLER
MANZOU-KUN!
BOTH CRIMI-NALS..
IN OTHER WORDS, ACCOM-PLICES..
THE PROBLEM IS
DON'T TELL ME YOU... THINK IT'S TOKIWA-SAN..?
THE POINT IS, SAKICHI-SAN IS NEITHER OF THEM.
IT'S NOT JUST THE IZAWA-YA INCIDENT, IT'S THAT NEITHER THE HUMAN SOULS SELLER OR THE NEWS SELLER COULD BE CALLED SHORT.


I CAME A LITTLE EARLIER THAN THE APPOINTED HOUR.
BUT...
BUT THEN IT TURNS OUT THERE WAS NO CRIMINAL..
THAT WHEN YOU MET THE HUMAN SOULS SELLER, I WAS WITH TOKIWA-SAN, HIRAKAWA-SAN.
AT THE TAKATSUKASA MANSION.

THAT'S WHY I'VE BEEN AT A LOSS EVER SINCE.

YES.

Fourth Act. When the earnest prayers of the creatures of the night are answered. (Part 2)



I UNDER-
STAND
I CAN'T
STAND TO
LOOK AT
HIM
HE'S SO...
PAINED

THAT'S EXACTLY RIGHT, MANZOU-SAN!
EVEN FOR TOKIWA-SAMA, A BROTHER IS A BROTHER AND THERE'S NO WAY IT WOULDN'T BE HARD FOR HIM!
COME TO THINK OF IT, NOW TOKIWA-SAN HAS LOST ALMOST ALL OF HIS CLOSEST BLOOD RELATIVES
YES, THAT'S RIGHT
AND THE REST OF THEM ARE ALL BUT SAYING TOKIWA-SAMA HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH IT
BUT WHEN IT COMES TO THE RELATIVES, THEY MIGHT AS WELL THROW A PARTY
COME THIS WAY FOR A MOMENT...
WHAT IS IT?
HEY, O-TAE-SAN...
YOU MUST BE RIGHT...
HE WOULD NEVER DO SUCH A THING!

..YOU SEE..
ABOUT THE QUARREL BETWEEN THE RELATIVES, IS IT SO BA-
BEFORE YOU SHOW US TO OUR SEATS, WE'D LIKE TO TALK TO YOU FOR A MINUTE.
ALL RIGHT..
AS IF.
I BET HE WANTS TO THANK THE FLAMING DEMON OR WHATEVER IT WAS.
HE PRETENDS TO BE ALL PROPER AND ADMIRABLE, BUT INSIDE, HE MUST BE LEAPING WITH JOY
THAT WAS RATHER... FIERCE.
TO HIS MOTHER'S RELATIVES, A LOT DEPENDS ON WHETHER SOMEONE OF THEIR OWN BLOODLINE COULD BECOME HEAD THE TAKATSUKASA FAMILY
BUT THAT'S OVER NOW..
.....
I SWEAR, WHAT KIND OF PERSON COULD WANT AN INHERITANCE SO BADLY AS TO KILL THEIR OWN BROTHER?
HE AND THAT S AKICHI WERE THE ONLY TWO PEOPLE TOGETHER WITH NAOHIRO-SAMA.
IT'S OBVIOUS THAT HE DID IT, ISN'T IT?

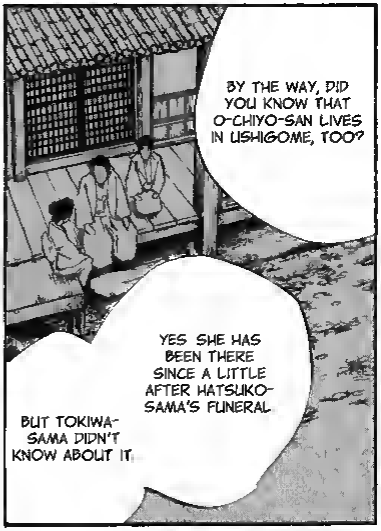
THE RELATIVES ON TOKIWA-SAMA'S SIDE ARE DESPERATE TO MAKE HIM BREAK UP WITH HER AND THEY EVEN WENT TO CONFRONT HER DIRECTLY, IN HER OWN HOUSE
KIKUE-SAN MUST SUFFER A LOT.
ARE YOU ON HER SIDE?
I SEE.
THEN, WHAT ABOUT KIKUE-SAN?
IF HE BECOMES HEAD OF THE FAMILY, THEN YES
BUT, WELL, IT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR KIKUE-SAN TO BECOME HIS WIFE
I'M NOT,
BUT A DUKE-TO-BE AND A GEISHA GETTING TOGETHER IS A LITTLE LIKE A PLAY, SO I LIKE IT
I GUESS YOU WOULD.
BRANCH FAMILY?
THEN I'D SIDE WITH THE PEOPLE ON NAOSHI-SAMA'S SIDE AND DO MY BEST TO MAKE SURE TOKIWA-SAMA BECOMES HEAD OF A BRANCH FAMILY INSTEAD
IF IT WERE ME, I'D PRETEND WE'VE BROKEN UP,

BUT I SOMETIMES WONDER WHAT IN THE WORLD TOKIWA-SAMA IS THINKING...
YOU HAVE A POINT THERE...
YOU'RE RIGHT.
YES. IN THAT CASE, THE RULES ABOUT CHOOSING A WIFE ARE MUCH MORE FLEXIBLE.
REALLY -
HE EVEN HOAXED AN ACQUAINTANCE TO LEAVE IT TO HIM.
THE MOURNING FOR HATSUKO-SAMA IS BARELY OVER AND HE'S BACK TO THAT POSITION.
AH!
I THINK THAT'S WHY HE CHOSE A WOMAN LIKE KIKUE-SAN, WHO IS THE COMPLETE OPPOSITE OF HATSUKO-SAMA...
HATSUKO-SAMA REALLY ADORED TOKIWA-SAMA,
AND HE SEEMED TO TREASURE HER, TOO.
BUT I THINK THERE WERE ALL SORTS OF... THOUGHT GOING THROUGH HIS HEAD ALL ALONG.
OH, NO! I'M REALLY SUCH A CHATTER-BOX!
PLEASE, KEEP WHAT I JUST SAID A SECRET!
OF COURSE WE WILL.

A MESSENGER CAME FROM NAOSHI-SAMA AND TOKIWA-SAMA WENT OUT...
BY THE WAY,
AFTER THAT, MARINO-SAN CAME AND TOLD SAKICHI-SAN THAT NAOSHI-SAMA HAD GONE OUT, TOO...
AND THEN SAKICHI-SAN WENT OUT AS WELL.
DO YOU HAPPEN TO KNOW WHAT TOKIWA-SAN AND NAOSHI-SAN WERE IN THE PAGODA?
YES, BECAUSE IT WAS ONE OF THE MANSERVANTS FROM HIS HOUSE AT USHIGOME.
ARE YOU CERTAIN THE MESSENGER CAME FROM NAOSHI-SAN?
BY THE CRIMINAL?
YES IF SOMEONE SLIPPED THE MANSERVANT SOME LOSE CHANGE OR SOMETHING...
THAT MUST HAVE BEEN WHERE HE WAS CALLED OUT TO.
SO I THINK NAOSHI-SAMA MIGHT HAVE BEEN CALLED OUT THE SAME WAY..

HMMM...

IS SHE HERE NOW?
SHE'S IN THE COTTAGE WHERE I'M LEADING YOU NOW
AND MARINO-SAN?


BY THE WAY, DID YOU KNOW THAT O-CHIYO-SAN LIVES IN USHIGOME, TOO?
YES SHE HAS BEEN THERE SINCE A LITTLE AFTER HATSUKO-SAMA'S FUNERAL
BUT TOKIWA-SAMA DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT IT

SOME MAY CALL HER "PROGRESSIVE," BUT...
WHAT KIND OF DAUGHTER OF NOBILITY GOES WALKING AROUND THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL ALL ALONE?

SHE'S HERE, TOO.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO MAKE OF THAT GIRL.
WHY?

SHE WAS CARRYING A LETTER OF INTRODUCTION FROM THE KUJOU HOUSE
WHEN WE INQUIRED FROM DUKE KUJOU ABOUT HER, HE SAID TO TAKE CARE OF HER, SO WE LET HER INTO THE FAMILY
EH?
YOU MEAN SHE CAME ALONE?
YES.
YEAH, RIGHT?
WHEN SOMEONE TRIES TALKING TO HER ABOUT IT, SHE ALWAYS TALKS HER WAY OUT OF IT.
BUT I HEAR THAT EVEN DUKE KUJOU WASN'T VERY CERTAIN WHAT HER RELATION TO THE FAMILY IS
HOW DID YOU EVEN LET HER INTO THE FAMILY, THEN?
HE'S STAYING IN VISCOUNT KURABASHI'S RESIDENSE
THAT'S HATSUKO-SAMA'S PARENTAL HOUSE. IT'S BECAUSE TASUKU-SAMA'S MOTHER WAS RELATED TO HER
AH, AND ONE MORE THING - DO YOU KNOW IF TASUKU-SAN IS HERE?
I SEE.

THE KURABASHI FAMILY ARE DIVINERS, INHERITING THE BLOOD OF ABE-NO-SEIMEI
MAYBE HE'S ON TO SOMETHING?
HE WAS ADVISING TOKIWA-SAMA TO SELL IT
COME TO THINK OF IT, EVEN AT HATSUKO-SAMA'S FUNERAL,
HE CAME HERE AT THE END OF LAST YEAR, BUT HE SAID HE HATED THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE AZABU MANSION
BESIDES, THE PREVIOUS MASTER WAS VERY PARTICULAR ABOUT THE LAYOUT AND KEPT CORRECTING THE ARCHITECTS
BUT HATSUKO-SAMA LOVED THE MANSION
RIGHT, THANK YOU FOR EVERYTHING
I SEE...
THEN THERE MUST BE SOME OTHER REASON

IT'S ALL RIGHT, I WON'T PRINT ANYTHING.
Phew
I'M GLAD.
WILL YOU USE WHAT I JUST SAID..?
THIS WAY, PLEASE

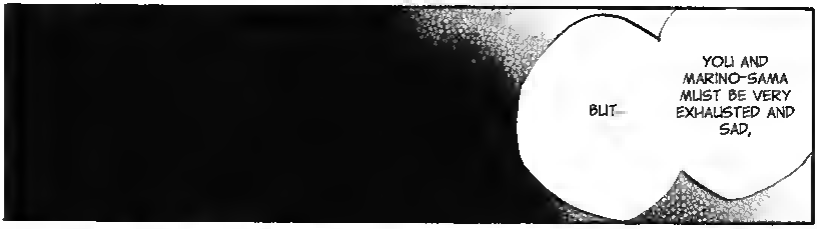
Chuckle
THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR COMING
SAKICHI-SAN, IT MUST BE VERY HARD FOR YOU, SUCH THINGS HAPPENING ONE AFTER ANOTHER.
NO, DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME..

HIRAKA-WA-SAN,
SAKICHI IS A PUDDLE OF JOY.
YOU SHOULD BE CONGRATULATING HIM.
KIKUE-SAN...
HOW COULD YOU SAY SUCH A THING?
AH, BUT I'M ONLY SAYING THE TRUTH.
AFTER ALL, IT WASN'T BLOODY LIKELY THAT THIS 'EVIL BY BIRTH' FOX WOMAN IS GOING TO LET GO,
SO SOMETHING HAD TO BE DONE YOU MUST HAVE RACKED YOUR BRAINS QUITE A LOT TO COME UP WITH THIS

SOME CHEEK YOU HAVE
PLEASE, STOP THIS. I APOLOGIZE, MADAM,
SHE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT SHE'S SAYING, SO DON'T BELIEVE HER
KIKUE!
I TOLD YOU TO CUT IT OUT!
EHM... SAKICHI-SAN
WHY WOULD I BE HAPPY THAT THIS NAOSHI-SAMA IS DEAD?!
WHEN NAOSHI-SAMA STILL LIVED WITH US, I USED TO TAKE CARE OF HIM JUST AS I DID OF TOKIWA-SAN!
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING BEFORE HIS MOTHER?!

O-CHIYO-SAMA

IT DOESN'T BOTHER ME
I ALREADY KNOW THAT YOU ARE NOT THAT KIND OF PERSON


YOU AND MARINO-SAMA MUST BE VERY EXHAUSTED AND SAD,
BUT—

I THINK IT JUST WASN'T MEANT TO BE.

LOOKS LIKE I'M NOT MEANT TO BE WITH ANYONE FROM THE TAKATSUKASA FAMILY.
FATHER WAS RIGHT WHEN HE WAS TELLING ME THAT IF IT CAME TOT HIS, I SHOULD STICK WITH TOKIWA-SAN.
TOO BAD FOR YOU.
YES, REALLY.
I GUESS THAT'S WHAT THEY CALL "CRYING OVER SPILLED MILK."
YOU SHOULD HAVE REMAINED IN THE PRINCI-PAL HOUSE
SAKICHI-SAN,
IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME.
NO, O-CHIYO-SAMA...

NO...
YOU MUST STAY, YOU ARE HIS MOTHER
O-CHIYO-SAMA...
I REGRET MORE THAN ANYTHING
THAT I CANNOT TAKE NAOSHI BACK HOME WITH
THERE'S NO REASON WHY I SHOULD BE PRESENT AT A TAKATSUKASA FUNERAL
MY SON WAS NAKAHATA NAOSHI!

Slam
Silence
...

SHALL WE EXCUSE OURSELVES, HIRAKAWA-SAN?
YES.
AH, SAKICHI-SAN, WE WILL BE—
?
EVERYONE, I THINK YOU HAVEN'T MET
WHAT AN... UNUSUAL PLACE.

stand
THIS IS THE THIRD SON IN THE FAMILY, TASUKU-SAMA.
TASUKU..

WHY
IS SOMEONE LIKE YOU PRESENT?
TASUKU-SAMA?

?
step
step
WHAT ARE YOU AFTER?
IF YOU HAVE ANY MALICIOUS INTENT, I WON'T SHOW YOU ANY MERCY
SAKICHI-SAN, I WILL EXCUSE MYSELF.

step
step
TASUKU-SAMA...
WHAT JUST HAPPENED...?
ARE YOU ACQUAINTANCES?
SAKICHI, WHO ARE THEY?
AH, YES
THIS IS ARITA KIKUE-SAMA.
AND THESE ARE HIRAKAWA-SAMA AND MANZOU-SAMA...
I SEE. YOU WERE ON YOUR WAY OUT OF THE PRINCIPAL HOUSE WHEN I MET YOU.
I WONDER
ACQUAINTANCES...?

YES
WE HEARD YOU WERE IN THE CAPITAL EVEN THOUGH YOU ALWAYS LIVED IN KYOTO...
THAT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU.
BUT I DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THAT, TOO
I DON'T NEED TO KEEP YOU INFORMED OF THAT EITHER, SAKICHI
YOU ARE STICKLERS FOR PROPRIETY, RIGHT? SO I CAME TO SHOW MY FACE
IF I MISSED THAT, YOU'D KICK UP SUCH A FUSS AFTERWARDS

SO YOU KNEW TASUKU-SAMA, HIRAKAWA-SAN?
I JUST MET HIM ON MY WAY HOME
I'VE ONLY MET HIM A COUPLE OF TIMES MYSELF.
HE DOESN'T COME HERE OFTEN?
NO
THE LAST TIME I SAW HIM WAS AT HATSUKO-SAMA'S FUNERAL.

NO.
LAST TIME I MET HIM, WE WERE QUITE CLOSE TO THIS PLACE.
DIDN'T HE DROP BY?
HE ONLY EVER VISITS THE HOUSE AFTER SOMETHING BAD HAS HAPPENED
WAS HE REALLY IN THE VICINITY?
WHAT IS THAT?
MAY I KNOW ONE THING?
ONE MORE THING... I KNOW IT'S NOT APPROPRIATE TO ASK IN THE CIRCUM-STANCES, BUT...
YES...
WHEN HE WENT TO THE PAGODA, YOU CAUGHT UP WITH HIM ONLY AFTERWARDS
WHY DIDN'T YOU GO WITH TOKIWA-SAN?

AH, I SEE.
AND YOU WERE VERY RIGHT TO BE WORRIED, TOO
TOKIWA-SAMA SAID HE WAS GOING ALONE,
BUT I WAS JUST TOO WORRIED TO LET HIM GO ON HIS OWN, SO...
ANYWAY, WE SHOULD BE GLAD THAT AT LEAST TOKIWA-SAN IS SAFE AND SOUND
YES...

TOUKEI IBUN VOLUME 3: THE END